Evaluation of the role of UNICEF in Education Sector Wide Approaches in Eastern and Southern Africa

Business as Usual or Making a Difference…?

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<tr>
<td>AGEI</td>
<td>African Girls Education Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAG</td>
<td>Cash Assistance to Government</td>
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<td>CFS</td>
<td>Child Friendly School</td>
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<td>CCA</td>
<td>Common Country Assessment</td>
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<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
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<td>COPE</td>
<td>Complementary Opportunities for Primary Education</td>
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<td>CRC</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<td>DCI</td>
<td>Development Cooperation Ireland</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development, UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMIS</td>
<td>Education Management Information System</td>
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<td>ESA</td>
<td>Eastern and Southern Africa</td>
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<td>ESAR</td>
<td>Eastern and Southern Africa Region</td>
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<td>ESARO</td>
<td>Eastern and Southern Africa Region Office</td>
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<td>ECCD</td>
<td>Early Childhood Care and Development</td>
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<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education For All</td>
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<td>EFA FTI</td>
<td>Education For All Fast Track Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMIS</td>
<td>Education Management Information System</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAWE</td>
<td>Forum for African Women Educationalists</td>
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<td>FPE</td>
<td>Free Primary Education</td>
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<td>HR</td>
<td>Human Resource(s)</td>
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<td>MDG's</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<td>MoE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>MQP</td>
<td>Minimum Quality Package</td>
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<td>MTEF</td>
<td>Medium Term Expenditure Framework</td>
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<td>MTR</td>
<td>Mid-Term Review</td>
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<td>MTSP</td>
<td>Medium Term Strategic Plan</td>
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<td>MVC’s</td>
<td>Marginalised and Vulnerable Children</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Government Organisation</td>
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<td>OR</td>
<td>Other Resources</td>
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<td>PAGE</td>
<td>Programme for the Advancement of Girls’ Education</td>
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<td>PER</td>
<td>Public Expenditure Review</td>
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<td>PRSP</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper</td>
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<td>RR</td>
<td>Regular Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDP</td>
<td>Sector Development Programme</td>
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<td>SPO</td>
<td>Senior Programme Officer</td>
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<td>SWAp</td>
<td>Sector Wide Approach</td>
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<td>TOR</td>
<td>Terms of Reference</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNCT</td>
<td>United Nations Country Team</td>
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<td>UNDAF</td>
<td>United Nations Development Assistance Framework</td>
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<td>UNDG</td>
<td>United Nations Development Group</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
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<td>UNGEI</td>
<td>United Nations Girls Education Initiative</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Programme</td>
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Many individuals and institutions have contributed towards the completion of this very timely and important study.

Firstly, we wish to express our gratitude to John Virtue, the consultant who worked tirelessly to produce this study. We also wish to acknowledge and thank all the staff of UNICEF for their considerable support throughout the project. In particular, Changu Mannathoko, the ESARO Regional Education Adviser gave overall direction and invaluable advice and Aster Haregat assisted with the same, and Eunice Wambugu and Jael Olang offered excellent administrative support.

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Our gratitude goes to numerous Government officials, Government Technical Advisers, consultants, Development Partners and NGO staff in countries where the consultant of the study visited and has worked - for experiences and discussions ‘on the ground’ that have informed views contained in this study. For all external partners, special thanks for your valuable time and inputs.

Lastly, this study was initiated by the UNICEF Regional Management Team of Eastern and Southern Africa who were of the view that the evaluation of the role of UNICEF in the Education SWAp process throughout the region was necessary. I support this viewpoint because the recommendations of the study will assist in shaping how UNICEF plans, programs and monitors its role in Education Sector Wide Approaches.

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UNICEF ESARO
1. Executive Summary

Sector wide approaches (SWAps) are increasingly prevalent in Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) and UNICEF has been and remains a key player. UNICEF has made significant contributions within SWAps and is a highly valued partner. Specific examples of good practice are provided in this study and include: assisting with the development of sector plans and specific policies and strategies; facilitating inter-sectoral policy dialogue, strategy development and implementation; and supporting mainstreaming and scaling up of key strategies, often through pilot initiatives.

UNICEF’s ‘corporate’ position clearly states commitment to SWAps. At the same time, it is widely acknowledged, both internally and amongst external partners (Governments and Development Partners), that SWAps present considerable challenges for UNICEF and that performance and effective engagement has been mixed. Whilst UNICEF has made incremental progress in enhancing its understanding and engagement, given the increasing pace of transition to new aid modalities and adoption of SWAps in ESA, it is essential that UNICEF improves its performance. Failure to do so might result in a diminishing of UNICEF’s credibility and role as SWAps and approaches to aid effectiveness develop. This in turn would limit UNICEF’s contribution to efforts to reduce poverty and achieve the MDG’s.

UNICEF identifies policy development as a key role and a comparative advantage, in particular through piloting innovative approaches and documenting lessons to inform national policies and implementation strategies. Notwithstanding some notable successes, experiences have been mixed. It is questionable whether many UNICEF supported pilot projects are well designed, set up and implemented as pilots, and whether innovative approaches are being used, as opposed to gap filling through small scale service delivery. A key concern is that design, evaluation, documentation, lesson learning and advocacy has been of insufficiently high quality to achieve policy-relevant results. Whilst many partners consider UNICEF's presence and operations in the ‘field’ as a potential comparative advantage they want to hear much more about its relevance to policy development.

A key challenge is to consider how demonstration projects can be taken to scale within a sector wide context and through national systems. This necessitates rigorous analysis of how strategies and approaches might be sustained outside of the protected and artificial project environment. It is increasingly important that UNICEF understands and engages in analysis and dialogue related to sector-wide and national policy, financing and institutional development issues. UNICEF capacity in these areas is recognized as relatively weak and this limits the extent to which UNICEF is able to make credible inputs to dialogue on policy priorities and resource allocation including scaling up implementation of UNICEF priority concerns.

UNICEF’s focus areas and objectives are entirely consistent with sector development programmes and poverty reduction strategies. However, there is sometimes a tendency for UNICEF to strongly advocate its policy and strategy approaches in its focus areas with insufficient attention to key factors which will determine whether an intervention is likely to achieve sustainable results. In some cases, partners have expressed the view that UNICEF ‘pushes’ particular approaches in a fairly prescriptive and protective manner. Related to this is the perception that UNICEF has a tendency to follow generic approaches emanating from global or regional level with insufficient flexibility and responsiveness to Government policy priorities. In some countries, UNICEF’s participation in policy dialogue mechanisms is inconsistent. There can be a tendency to only participate in discussions related to a UNICEF ‘agenda’ and to send relatively junior staff to ‘high level’ meetings.
These issues bring into question the extent to which support is well aligned with national plans. Where UNICEF is most successful, the emphasis is on working with partners to develop approaches based on holistic and sector-wide analysis, drawing on a combination of expertise and experiences including what UNICEF is able to contribute. A narrow and uninformed view can lead to distortion and dilution of policy priorities and/or will limit UNICEF’s effectiveness and credibility at the policy table.

As regards specific areas of comparative advantage and success, the study highlights examples in relation to gender mainstreaming and girls’ education, inter-sectoral policy development, and scaling up non-formal/complementary education approaches. Notwithstanding successes, it should be noted that experiences with gender and girls’ education are mixed and concerted efforts to accelerate progress will be essential. This includes more effective facilitation of strategic, coordinated and systematic approaches through the United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI). Whilst these areas are not definitive they may merit particular focus. In addition, it is suggested that UNICEF should consider supporting secondary education policy/strategy development (in the context of increasing demand) and intensifying support to both national poverty reduction strategies and inter-sectoral approaches to social protection for marginalized and vulnerable children.

UNICEF’s programming procedures and processes, including design, planning, implementation and review, are extraordinarily heavy and time consuming, and are largely parallel to Government systems. This puts a severe burden on Government staff, limits meaningful participation, undermines ownership, constrains capacity and sustains high transaction costs. UNICEF financial processes, including budgeting, disbursement, accounting and reporting are contrary to accepted good practice in SWAps. In addition, these processes limit UNICEF staff engagement in more strategically oriented work. UNICEF and other UNDG agencies increasingly recognize these problems and are taking action to simplify and harmonise procedures through UN reforms (in the context of the wider harmonization and alignment agenda). This is welcome and is likely to make a difference. At the same time, the planned reforms are unlikely to go far enough.

Whilst not synonymous with SWAp, pooled funding and direct budget support external assistance modalities are increasingly used as SWAps develop and are becoming the overwhelming preference of Governments and Development Partners in the region. UNICEF staff understanding of different types of modalities is mixed but on the whole limited. Furthermore perceptions of the value of alternative modalities to projects again are mixed but overwhelmingly skeptical. If staff are to operate effectively in the changing aid environment they must have a better understanding of existing and emerging thinking and approaches to aid.

UNICEF has recently taken the decision to contribute to a sector budget support pooled fund in Kenya and is considering possibilities for using pooled funding in other countries. Potential advantages of contributing to pooled funds and also some possible limitations are outlined in the study. Whilst it is suggested that UNICEF should ‘test’ such modalities on a selective basis, it is emphasized that the primary means by which UNICEF engages in policy dialogue must be through high quality technical analysis and advice. It is recognized that UNICEF is unlikely to channel large financial amounts through pooled funds and that project type support will remain the pre-dominant modality.
A fundamental challenge for UNICEF to more effectively engage in high level policy processes will be to deliver higher quality advice. Whilst its technical capacity and its operations remain primarily focused on project implementation this will not be possible. When project management competes with policy work, the latter invariably takes lower priority. The orientation, profile and experience of UNICEF staff is heavily skewed to project management and 'traditional' areas of education, and insufficiently matched to the requirements of SWAp. Areas requiring greater capacity include sector-wide education policy and planning, financial and budget analysis and planning, and institutional development, governance and public sector management. In addition, staff are not provided with sufficient opportunity to develop their experience and capacity for policy engagement.

This study suggests the need for a combination of strategies to enhance the effectiveness of UNICEF’s engagement in SWAp. Detailed recommendations are outlined in the main text and are summarised in section 12. Key recommended strategies include:

- Scaling down project implementation and improving the focus and quality of demonstration projects for policy development and scaling up
- Enhancing the quality and relevance of policy analysis and development within sector-wide and national policy contexts
- Accelerated implementation of ongoing programme simplification measures and review the potential for further simplification - in the context of UN reforms and the harmonization and alignment agenda
- Human resource management initiatives including specialist recruitment, capacity development and review of staff roles and organizational structure in respect to project management/policy work
- Clarification of the UNICEF position on SWAps and the new development and aid agenda, including internal guidelines and communication/dissemination to external partners

It is recognised that there are factors, including organizational issues, that are likely to pose considerable challenges in implementing these strategies. Not least, the nature of UNICEF’s funding sources constrains the extent to which a move away from project implementation can be realized. There is limited flexibility in the use of Other Resources, and limited funding through Regular Resources, to support a shift from project implementation to policy work. It will be important to negotiate agreements with funding partners that allow for greater flexibility in the use of Other Resources, including in some cases, ‘educating' funding partners on new development and aid approaches.

Organisational incentives are primarily geared towards project management operations, including recognition and rewards related to spending and managing internal systems, as opposed engaging in external processes. Also, the requirement for attribution, visibility and ‘branding’ (seen as inappropriate within SWAps) is inconsistent with principles of ownership and partnership. UNICEF will need to tone down its visibility and profile raising activities, at least at the country level.

Finally, whilst many of the recommended actions are unlikely to be easy, a ‘business as usual’ approach is not a viable option. The fact that UNICEF recognizes many of the issues outlined in this study, and has outlined commitment and broad strategies to address them, provides a strong basis for improving its engagement. In particular, the UNICEF Medium Term Strategic Plan 2006-2009, outlines a number of important
commitments which are consistent with the findings of this study and will help to
guide the organisation’s role in SWAps and the new aid environment.

2. Introduction

The adoption of sector-wide approaches in education (and other sectors, particularly
health) is more prevalent in Africa than anywhere else. In countries in Eastern and
Southern Africa (ESA) it is particularly prevalent. A number of countries in the region
began developing SWAps in the mid to late 1990’s and other countries have adopted
the approach since. Some of these countries are relatively advanced in using SWAp
and more countries are currently initiating SWAps. With the benefit of experiences
elsewhere, coupled with associated national reform processes and the new aid
agenda, the pace of developing and adopting SWAps is increasing. It is very unlikely
that this trend will be reversed.

The UNICEF ‘corporate’ position clearly states commitment to the approach and the
organisation has been and continues to be an important player in SWAps. UNICEF
has undertaken analysis and developed thinking as regards its role and the
implications of SWAp for the organisation. On the ground, as a key partner in social
sector development, UNICEF country offices are engaged in assisting with the
development of SWAps and in supporting implementation of sector development
programmes. UNICEF has made important, effective and valued contributions to
national development processes within SWAps.

Against this background, it is widely understood, both internally and amongst external
partners (Governments and other Development Partners), that SWAps present
considerable challenges for UNICEF. The organisation has generally been good at
identifying the most pressing challenges. It has also identified opportunities for
engagement and its value added in SWAps, much of which seems appropriate.

However, at headquarters, regional and country level, the organisation’s performance
in addressing challenges and in engaging effectively has been mixed. The overall
perception from partners, and to a significant degree within the organisation itself, is
that UNICEF has been slow to adapt to SWAps and to address key challenges. This
has compromised the extent to which UNICEF is able to provide appropriate and
effective support to national development within a SWAp environment. Assuming
that SWAps will more effectively contribute to the achievement of key development
outcomes than previous approaches (as UNICEF believes to be the case, if
implemented well), then UNICEF must improve its performance. Ultimately, as the
adoption of SWAp principles and mechanisms become more widespread and
mature, there will be a risk of UNICEF being ‘left behind’ if it is unable to effectively
adapt and respond.

The sub-title of this study – *Business as Usual or Making a Difference…?* – captures
the essence of UNICEF’s current position in respect to SWAp. The phrase was used
by senior UNICEF staff at an education SWAp workshop in 2003. It rightly suggests
that if changes are not undertaken, UNICEF is unlikely to achieve its aims in
significantly contributing to key development outcomes in SWAp environments.

Two important points are worthy of note. Firstly, it is acknowledged that some other
Development Partners are facing some of the same (or similar) challenges as those faced
by UNICEF, and the ability of some Development Partners to adapt has also been
slow and limited. Whilst analysis of the role and operations of other Development
Partners is clearly outside the scope of this study, they may find some of the analysis
and recommendations useful. The study should be particularly relevant for the other UN agency members of the UNDG (UNDP, UNFPA and WFP), not least in the context of ongoing UN Reform initiatives.

Secondly, the ultimate aim of the study is to provide analysis and recommendations that will facilitate concrete actions that will make a positive difference. In doing this, the study makes recommendations in a number of areas that will require considerable change management, many of which are unlikely to be easy. Notwithstanding this, it is important to emphasise that the recommendations have been developed with a view to what the author believes is possible. It is recognized that some UNICEF staff might be uncomfortable with some of the implications and inevitably not everyone will agree with certain analysis and recommendations. This is the nature of such a study and it would have limited worth if it ‘shied away’ from difficult issues - essentially maintaining a ‘business as usual’ approach. With this in mind, it is emphasized that the purpose of the study is not to criticize the organisation but to assist it to move forward. It is hoped that it the study will be received in this spirit.

2.1 Rationale and Terms of Reference

In Eastern and Southern Africa, twelve countries\(^1\) are at various stages of adopting SWAps in the education sector. As noted, UNICEF is a key player and is committed to building its capacity to support SWAps. In August 2003, UNICEF held a Regional Education SWAp workshop for staff and partners (Government, Development Partners and NGO’s) from ten ESA countries, and also UNICEF staff from HQ and two Asian countries. The main purpose was to build capacity, share experiences and consider implications for UNICEF. In early 2004, UNICEF commissioned a desk study to map experiences of education SWAps in eight ESA countries. The study provides information on the key features of the SWAp and the main focus of sector development programmes in each of the countries, including an overview and broad comparative analysis.

Two key initiatives originating from the workshop discussions were, a) to development a SWAp Resource Pack and b) to undertake an evaluation of the role of UNICEF in education SWAps in ESA. This study is the evaluation. Findings from the study will be used to inform the development of the Resource Pack which will be finalized in January 2006.

The TOR scope of work for the evaluation is as follows:

- Utilize the mapping study done in 2004 to inform UNICEF’s contribution to the SWAps process.
- Based on the document review, analysis and case studies from countries in the region do a capacity gap analysis for UNICEF in the SWAp process and describe interventions for capacity development in UNICEF (country and regional levels).
- Assess the general guidelines for UNICEF officers in SWAp engagement.
- Analyse the SWAp process documents and their compliance with CRC and CEDAW.
- Review the extent of engagement in gender mainstreaming in current SWAp plans and process including partnerships for girls’ education (UNGEI).

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\(^1\) Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.
Assess UNICEF’s role in the SWAp process in terms of intersectoral work with sectors such as social welfare, health, water and the presidency.

In relation to UNICEF’s role, document lessons learned and good practices in sector wide approaches in education.

Assess difficulties encountered by education staff that have to be both project managers and high level advisors in SWAp processes.

Assist UNICEF to internally understand and plan in terms of HR and time utilisation the appropriate balance between project management and engagement in external processes and networks, especially regarding UNGEI leadership.

Analyse needs in terms of monitoring and evaluation, and gender analysis of budgets and financial plans.

Whilst not referred to in the TOR, it was agreed that the study should give some attention to how UNICEF support poverty reduction strategy processes with respect to education SWAps. It is also worth noting that the study addresses aspects of new and evolving approaches to aid which are intrinsically related to SWAp (most importantly, aid modalities and the harmonization and alignment agenda).

2.2 Scope and Methodology

The study was undertaken through a combination of discussions with UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) staff, one week visits to seven countries in the region between July and September 2005 (Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda and Uganda), and document review.

At country level, discussions were held with UNICEF staff and a wide range of stakeholders including Government staff (at central and decentralized levels), representatives from Development Partner agencies and NGO's, and communities. In total, 216 people were consulted. Numbers by type of organisation and country are provided in Annex 1. Discussions were undertaken through a combination of individual/small meetings and larger group meetings. This included, where possible, observing some regular meetings/forums, for example UNICEF management meetings and Development Partner coordination meetings. Where time and logistics permitted, a short (usually half day) field visit was undertaken to a UNICEF supported project. Discussions were semi-structured around key areas. This provided focus, enabled comparison of information and also facilitated open and flexible discussion.

A large number of relevant documents were obtained and reviewed including:

- UNICEF global and regional policy, strategy, planning and procedures documents
- UNICEF country strategy, programme/project and review documents
- Government policy, planning and review documents
- Other Development Partner planning and review documents
- Other related reports/studies

Documents reviewed were both education sector specific and on wider issues (e.g. inter and cross-sectoral areas, national development plans, the new aid agenda, UN reform etc). It is worth drawing attention to two specific and recent documents that address similar issues to this study:

- **UNICEF AT THE CROSSROADS: How to be a player in sector-wide approaches and harmonisation.** IHSD (2004).
Evaluation of the role of UNICEF in Education SWAp in Eastern and Southern Africa

- **UN System’s Role, Constraints and Possibilities for Contributing to Sector-wide Programs and Budget Support.** Scanteam (2005).

The studies aim to address organisation wide issues drawing on specific analysis of experiences in countries in ESA (Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda and Zambia). Where the studies are referred to in this report they are called the IHSD and the Scanteam studies.

It is important to briefly clarify what this study is not. The study aims to address the TOR and provide as comprehensive an analysis of key issues as possible. At the same time, it should be understood that comprehensive and detailed country specific analysis is outside the scope of the TOR, and in any case would not be possible (and in some ways would be inappropriate). There are two main and inter-related reasons for this. Firstly, the level of interaction and analysis that is possible through one-off interviews in a period of one week is necessarily limited. Secondly, the level of analytical information available through both discussion and documentation was limited in some cases and areas (i.e. why, through what specific processes and by which actors, or combination of actors, was something achieved)? Anecdotal information and perceptions are included where relevant, but noted as such.

It follows from this that it is inappropriate to provide detailed recommendations outlining what UNICEF (or others) should do at country level, and this is not the purpose of the study. It would be highly presumptive and prescriptive to do this based on incomplete information, limited country knowledge and without meaningful participation of key stakeholders. This is necessarily a longer term process to be undertaken at country level.

However, the main body of the report does provide illustrative examples of ‘good practice’ (and practices that are less effective) at country level, including key lessons. It should be noted that, no doubt, many examples of good practice exist that are not included here. Selection of examples is based on information available, and what can be most accurately described and verified to illustrate a point and to extract useful lessons. Some examples from countries which were not visited as part of study are included, based on existing information and evaluation.

In addition, Annex 3 provides brief country observations including broad suggestions of approaches and actions in that may be worthy of consideration. These suggestions are briefly set in context including key aspects of the SWAp, and are based on discussions with interviewees and in particular, round-up meetings with UNICEF staff at the end of each country visit. Clearly, the process of determining whether these suggestions merit further consideration and how they may be taken forward should be undertaken through detailed analysis and discussion with partners.

So, the study is not an evaluation of UNICEF country education programmes and it is not a plan for what UNICEF should do in specific countries. However, it is an evaluation of ways in which UNICEF works and it does provide recommendations on how UNICEF can work more effectively.

Finally, it is emphasised that the opinions expressed in this study are the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of UNICEF or others. The author acknowledges responsibility for any factual errors contained in the study.

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2 A recommendation in this study is that UNICEF undertakes more detailed and selective case study analysis of working within SWAp.
3. **What is SWAp?**

A wide variety of definitions and understanding of SWAp exist. There is considerable confusion as to what it means and discussions undertaken as part of this study verify this. Throughout discussions, UNICEF staff have expressed the need to understand SWAp better, and have in some cases demonstrated a degree of misunderstanding of some aspects of SWAp. Rather than try to set out a comprehensive definition as a starting point, it is more useful to simply highlight a few fundamentals and some misperceptions. Detailed analysis throughout the report which focuses on how UNICEF might operate more effectively will shed further light on what SWAp means.

It is helpful to outline what SWAp is **not**. It is not a sector development programme or a sector policy or plan. It is not budget support or pooled funding. SWAp is an approach which is implemented through processes. The primary aims of the approach can be considered as the following:

- **to assist with developing**, under Government leadership, a prioritised sector-wide plan and associated financing programme (often called a sector development programme)

- **to develop mechanisms** for more effective use of external assistance, including alignment with the sector policy and plan, and increasing the use of Government systems for planning, implementation and disbursement of all funds

As stated, SWAp is not budget support or pooled funding. However, SWAp does necessarily involve moving towards using Government systems for channeling external assistance. This in turn means greater use of budget support and pooled funding mechanisms and a reduction in the use of project modalities.

So, SWAp is a process, it is not a tangible product. Whilst we might think in terms of whether a country has or does not have a ‘SWAp’ the reality is that SWAp refers to a process of moving towards adopting features of the approach, to different degrees and over a period of time. It is important to differentiate this from the tangible product – a comprehensive programme of policy, strategy, implementation and financing – a sector development programme which is usually developed through SWAp processes. For example, Rwanda ESSP is not a SWAp, it is a sector programme/plan developed through SWAp mechanisms.

It is often said that SWAp does not address, for example, education quality. It is important to clarify this. A sector development programme (or sector plan) may not give sufficient attention to education quality (or any other area) but this does not mean that adopting a SWAp approach will ‘rule out’ certain policy areas or strategies. This is emphasized because a common misperception is that the approach does intrinsically exclude certain areas. A sector plan developed through SWAp can accommodate any policy area – but SWAp does not guarantee that it will. Through improved prioritization and sequencing of strategies and resources, the use of SWAp is increasingly recognised as an opportunity to more effectively implement policy priorities in a systemic manner.

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3 A report in itself – and many such reports and studies exist. (A part of the SWAp Resource Pack will include a CD information and document collection on SWAps and related issues).

4 This partially draws on a commonly used definition in *The Status of Sector-Wide Approaches*, ODI, 2000.
It is important to consider SWAp in the context of evolving approaches to aid effectiveness with the primary purpose of contributing to poverty reduction and in particular meeting the targets set out in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The transformation of development assistance is underpinned by the harmonisation and alignment agenda which aims to ensure that assistance effectively and efficiently supports national development priorities and uses national systems. A key aim is to strengthen national leadership and ownership. SWAp and evolving aid modalities are key part of this transformation.
4. UNICEF’s evolving thinking and position on SWAps

UNICEF has been grappling with the concept and practice of SWAp since (or soon after) it emerged as a significant approach. An internal information note issued in December 1997 provides an overview of the rationale and principles of SWAp, and highlights some initial thinking on the implications for UNICEF. The note highlights opportunities presented by SWAp including leveraging policies and resources in favour of children, ensuring consistency of the UNICEF programme with the sector programme and taking UNICEF trials to scale. It also identifies some concerns including possible reduction in bi-lateral funding channeled through UNICEF, UNICEF capacity in the areas of policy engagement and financial analysis, and time commitments to engage in SWAp.

Interestingly, it suggests that UNICEF may have little value added where a SWAp does not move beyond a project approach and basic donor information sharing. It also states that if partners are genuinely committed to SWAp, it is likely to be superior to the project approach. The issue of UNICEF and projects is discussed in section 6. The note concludes that UNICEF cannot isolate itself from SWAp processes and guards against a ‘wait and see’ position.

In September 1999, UNICEF HQ issued ‘Programme Guidance on UNICEF’s role in Sector-Wide Approaches to Development’. The document provides a good overview of SWAp including key issues. The following is a summary of the key guidance outlined in respect to UNICEF engagement in SWAp.

Summary of Programme Guidance on UNICEF’s role in Sector-Wide Approaches to Development

Role

To contribute its particular perspective to the design and implementation of SWAps to promote human rights principles, a holistic child-centred approach, goals relevant to children and women and cross-sectoral perspectives, through the following strategies:

- Participation on sector policy and programme design teams
- Support to programmes and activities which are complementary to, or a formal part of the SWAp...including issues which may fall outside of the immediate scope of the sector-wide programme
- Use of community based programmes and activities as a source of feedback on policy effectiveness and innovative approaches as a useful input to sector-wide programming
- Advocacy and support for incorporation of human rights principles in SWAp design and implementation including universality, non-discrimination, participation and the best interests of the child.

Comparative Advantage/Value Added

- Provision of technical expertise to social sector planning including setting priorities, defining targets and a national minimum package, providing access to international information and good practice, and providing procurement services.
- Support to institutional capacity building for the SWAp including for sector assessment; policy development; research and piloting of innovative approaches; monitoring, review and evaluation; development of training and supervisory systems; setting up
participatory planning and consultative mechanisms.

- Advocacy and advice on incorporating cross-sectoral, people focused concerns and human rights in sectoral programmes

**Implications for UNICEF Programming Procedures**

- SWAps do not pose inherent contradictions to the standard Country Programme preparation and implementation procedures used by UNICEF*

- There may be opportunity for some streamlining of programming procedures and implementation, reducing for example, the need to hold separate review meetings

- Some country offices are participating in sector-wide reviews instead of holding bi-lateral reviews and using the sector-wide policy framework and the programme of work as a basis for setting out Annual Project Workplans

- Under current UNICEF financial procedures common (pooled) funding mechanisms cannot be used

- UNICEF can address issues related to changes in funding mechanisms by indicating UNICEF’s financial contribution within the sector-wide programme and budget framework, with normal procedures retained for implementation and/or earmarking funds for specifically identified activities within the sector programme for which separate accounts are provided by the national authorities

- If government has or wishes to take responsibility for procurement, changes to the UNICEF procurement procedures may have to be addressed

- Overall, it is important to note that all existing procedures used in the preparation and implementation of a Country Programme must be enforced

The guidance requests that Country Offices consult in writing with HQ on their participation in SWAps and emphasizes that all existing procedures must be enforced and that any role not in conformity with procedures must be referred to HQ for advice prior to any commitments being made. Finally the guidance notes that UNICEF is developing a systematic approach to lesson learning and identifying good practice in respect to SWAp including measures to enhance organizational lesson learning and information sharing.

These guidelines are still in place and represent the official position as regards engagement in SWAps. As such, key aspects will be revisited throughout the study both in respect to appropriateness (in 2005 and beyond) and as to whether UNICEF has been able to operate and perform in accordance with stated roles and strategies. As understanding and experience of SWAps has evolved since 2000 it is necessary that the guidance be revised and it is understood that it is the intention of UNICEF do so. Whilst these are the existing guidelines it is recognized that UNICEF has further developed its thinking and practice since they were issued.

A basic internal survey of UNICEF country office's engagement and experience of SWAps issued in December 2000 highlights major constraints as limited expertise in policy analysis and financing mechanisms, marginalization in policy dialogue due to small funding levels, and time requirements. Priority actions are identified as capacity building for staff and improved information provision and experience sharing.
Progress reports to the Executive Board of UNICEF in June 2001 and January 2003 provide further clarification on UNICEF’s position and thinking on SWAp. Most importantly that UNICEF ‘fully embraces’ SWAp and UNICEF’s programme approach corresponds to and supports SWAp. The need to improve capacity in policy dialogue and related issues is again reiterated.

Bringing the picture up to date, the UNICEF Medium Term Strategic Plan, 2006-2009 outlines a number of important commitments that will help to guide the organisations role in SWAps over the next four years. Specific commitments are highlighted throughout this report. Overall, the MTSP outlines a strong framework for enhancing UNICEF’s role and effectiveness in SWAp. In particular it outlines broad strategies for: improving policy dialogue and scaling up in respect to national and sector programmes; achieving greater focus and definition of its programmes including a shift in emphasis from project implementation to ‘upstream’ work; strengthening partnerships with civil society and others; harmonising and simplifying programming and procedures; strengthening results orientation; and improving overall performance through management, operational and human resource development measures.

The MTSP provides an important opportunity for UNICEF at an opportune time – most importantly the need to accelerate progress in meeting the Millennium Development Goals, and the increased focus on aid effectiveness and the associated new aid agenda geared to support the achievement of MDG’s.
5. Policy Processes

The UNICEF SWAp guidelines identify policy development as a key role and a comparative advantage. This is further reiterated in a number of documents. The draft MTSP 2006-2009 states that ‘UNICEF will substantially increase its emphasis in support of policy development’. This is rightly identified as a potential strength, is an appropriate role and an increase in emphasis is welcome. UNICEF has been engaging in policy development within SWAps in a number of countries. Some examples of effective support to policy development are highlighted in this study. Notwithstanding this, it is also an area that is perceived by many partners, and UNICEF staff, to be a significant weakness and one which needs to be improved. This section analyses UNICEF’s role and effectiveness in specific aspects of policy engagement within SWAps, including examples, and recommendations on enhancing effectiveness.

5.1 Formulation of sector plans

In most, if not all countries, UNICEF has contributed to the development and finalization of the education sector plan. This is typically through inclusion of specific policy areas UNICEF has assisted in developing, coupled with participation in consultations, working groups and sector reviews. Also, in some cases UNICEF has taken a prominent technical role in developing the plan as a whole, and this was stated in a number of countries. Insufficient information was made available to document a case in education however the development of the Health Sector Plan in Malawi provides a good example of how UNICEF can effectively contribute to such a process.

**UNICEF’s role in assisting with the formulation of the Malawi Health Sector Plan**

The decision to adopt a health sector-wide approach in Malawi was taken in 2000. The health sector has pioneered SWAp in Malawi and remains the furthest advanced sector in this respect. In 2002, the process of developing a Health Sector Plan was initiated under the leadership of the Ministry of Health and Population.

The Health Sector Plan is focused on the core business of the Essential Health Care Package (EHP). UNICEF was co-chair (with the ministry) of the EHP committee, based on a good track record of support to the health sector including assistance to Joint Implementation Plans (JIPs) prior to development of the SWAp. The development of the EHP as a clearly prioritized package of health services was considered to be an essential pre-requisite for donor funding to the sector.

A multi-agency funded team of technical advisers were commissioned under the management of the ministry to assist with developing the EHP/sector plan. UNICEF provided a consultant to assist with health financing and financial management, working as part of a team led by the Liverpool School of Tropical Health and reporting to the ministry. The key result was the development of a prioritized plan which is considered to be effective in establishing policy and programme strategies for achieving key health outcomes. The plan has mobilized increased resource allocation including through the establishment of a pooled funding mechanism.

Lessons:
- UNICEF can add considerable value to the formulation of sector plans, based on a track record in supporting sector-wide reform
- UNICEF can contribute to ‘leveraging’ external assistance by assisting with the formulation of sector plans, and scaling up implementation of core services
• Provision of effective specialist technical support\(^5\) in areas outside its perceived expertise (sector financing and financial management) can achieve key results consistent with UNICEF objectives
• UNICEF will build its own knowledge, capacity and credibility in providing such support
• Subsuming UNICEF technical support within a wider Government managed process including collaboration with other development partner agencies, will strengthen alignment, accountability to Government (as opposed to UNICEF), partnership, Government ownership and capacity building

The last lesson is particularly worthy of note in the sense that UNICEF were not simply advocating replication of a previous approach developed through UNICEF support. The emphasis was on working with partners to develop a systemic approach through sector-wide analysis, based on a combination of experiences including what UNICEF were able to bring to the table. There is sometimes a tendency for UNICEF to adopt the former approach and this is discussed later in this section.

5.2 Formulation of specific policies and strategies

Whether or not UNICEF has specifically contributed to the type of process described above, it is active, in all countries, in assisting with the development of specific policies and strategies within sector plans and participating in processes for finalizing plans. In terms of support, this is typically facilitated through short term technical consultancy assistance to a Government department or institution with coordination and in some cases additional technical advice from a UNICEF staff member(s).

Given UNICEF’s mandate and policy priorities, it is involved in advocating for and assisting with policy development in particular areas. This is not inconsistent with SWAp, is where UNICEF can best use its comparative advantage and is recognized and valued by Governments and Development Partners. It is also consistent with UNICEF’s view of its value added, including the intention to give increasing focus to technical support to policy development. It is usually the intention that these processes be informed by evidence extracted from UNICEF supported pilot projects. The specific issue of the role of pilot projects in policy development and scaling up is discussed in section 6.3. This analysis is concerned with the focus, type and scope of support to policy development.

UNICEF has been effective in facilitating policy development in a number of areas and in a number of countries, and this has contributed to improved strategies and increased resource allocation to achieve key development outcomes. A good example is provided under ‘inter-sectoral’ policy support below. However, there are limitations in the way that UNICEF (and some other Development Partners) often works in this respect.

There is often a tendency to focus on too many areas at once. For example, in Lesotho, UNICEF has supported and continues to support multiple policy/strategy interventions\(^6\). At the same time it was widely reported by UNICEF and other

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\(^5\) It was noted by many staff that UNICEF are often unable to provide consultants with appropriate skills and experience at a ‘high level’ because UNICEF has restrictions or ceilings on fee rates.

\(^6\) Including policies for Free Primary Education, Basic Education, Curriculum, School Health, ECD, HIV/AIDS in Education, Gender, Alternative Learning/NFE, Education Quality strategies, Youth Development strategies, EFA communications strategy, and assisting with legislative reforms (Education Law, Sexual Offences Act, and a Child Protection and Welfare Act). It is recognized that this may be partly due to the small number of Development Partners in Lesotho.
Development Partners that official Government endorsement and translation of many policies/strategies into meaningful programmes for implementation is limited and very slow. There is simply too much being done at the same time. This is not to say that some of these initiatives have not been effective and indeed essential. It is also recognized that some areas are inter-dependent and progress in one will be related to progress in another. The purpose here is not to suggest what should be done and what should not, but to highlight the risk of policy proliferation and the associated dangers of policy overload and stagnation. It is widely perceived that there is an element of policy overload in most countries and we are all familiar with the oft used phrase about reports sitting on shelves.

Policy/strategy development typically involves a combination of initial consultations, baseline assessment, studies, sometimes trialing and review, revisions, further consultations, formulating frameworks and programme plans, and finalization/approval processes. All, ideally, underpinned by broad stakeholder participation. This is an intensive, demanding and time consuming process. Then strategies need to be implemented. A previous DFID Education Adviser in Uganda suggested (from experience in what is considered to be a relatively successful process of education policy reform within SWAp) that any system can only effectively manage and use two or three major policy studies simultaneously. Difficulties will be exacerbated where expertise, resources and capacities (most importantly for implementation) are limited. In addition to overstretching Government it is clear from discussions that UNICEF also becomes overstretched by attempting to support too many areas.

The key lesson is clear – UNICEF (and other partners) should scale down policy development initiatives. Greater prioritisation is critical and this should be based on what is considered to be essential coupled with institutional assessment of what a system can meaningfully absorb and implement. Ideally, a sector plan and associated programme of work will guide the prioritization and sequencing of policy development and implementation initiatives. It is acknowledged that this is not always in place (but is generally improving) however this does not mean that a plan containing a long list of policy aims should be considered as a ‘green light’ to do everything at once.

In practical terms it is recommended that UNICEF and Government take stock of current UNICEF support in each country, with, as a general rule, a view to not initiate new policy processes. The focus should be on assisting Government to a) finalise and operationalise policies/strategies in progress and b) assess the progress of and appropriateness of initiatives that are not achieving results with a view to slowing down or postponing action. Clearly some new priorities for policy development may emerge and UNICEF may be best placed to assist. In such cases, they should be subject to ‘capacity assessment’, including a possible refocusing of support from other areas to ensure meaningful progress can be made.

What are the implications for UNICEF in terms of priority focus areas? UNICEF country staff were asked why does UNICEF not refocus its support by concentrating in fewer areas? A common response was that this would be unacceptable within the organization because a) we cannot neglect areas we consider to be important, b) we

7 Ward, M. Presentation to a SWAp workshop in Hanoi, November 2004.
8 For example, a report on assistance to education in Rwanda highlights a large number of TA studies funded largely by one donor which have generated policy and strategy overload. Foster, M. et al, Improving the Provision and Management of External Support to Education. Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Scientific Research, Kigali.
would be not be following regional/HQ objectives and c) that we would be failing to address key gaps in helping countries. At the same time, many staff consider the prospect of greater focus an attractive and potentially effective strategy. Some staff, and notably some Representatives, are of the opinion that this is essential. ESARO staff emphasized that there is no reason for not working in fewer areas based on context specific country assessment. In keeping with this, the MTSP 2006-09 states that UNICEF cooperation is not expected to address all Focus Areas in all countries.

As highlighted, assessment and understanding of capacities and resources is a critical pre-requisite when undertaking policy/strategy development processes. Without this there is a significant risk that strategies will not be implemented or implemented in a systematic and sustainable manner. It is not just about reducing the number of policy/strategy initiatives, it is about developing strategies in such a way that they can be realistically implemented. The following example describes a significant opportunity for UNICEF to contribute to policy/strategy, highlighting the need to adopt a sector-wide and realistic approach.

In **Rwanda**, the ministry, in discussions with Development Partners at the 2005 sector review, decided to develop a Minimum Quality Package (MQP). This is considered as a core initiative and signals an increased emphasis on quality. As part of the new Nine Year Basic programme (including strategies to increase numbers of trained teachers, increase supply of learning materials and provide more classrooms) the initiative will aim to enhance quality alongside expansion of access. Furthermore, the start up of a pooled sector budget support mechanism should ensure increased resource allocation to basic education.

UNICEF has participated in discussions to agree initiation of the MQP and has been invited by the ministry to take a prominent technical role based on its comparative advantage. This is clearly a significant opportunity for UNICEF to assist with improving and scaling up quality. Initial UNICEF, and it appears ministry, thinking is that the Child Friendly School (CFS) model, already implemented through UNICEF supported projects in some districts, will be defined as the MQP. Implementation of ‘pilot’ CFS models as the MQP is intended to facilitate nationwide implementation, presumably through demonstration for scaling up.

It is suggested that ‘wholesale’ adoption of the CFS approach is unlikely to facilitate nationwide, systemic and sustainable adoption of a MQP, not least in respect to affordability but also in terms of institutionalizing a set of approaches in a context where the provision of essentials is often lacking. As such, wholesale replication as a national *minimum* standard is unlikely to result in the development of a realistic policy and implementation framework. Two key Development Partner representatives expressed reservations, ultimately with the view that the approach is unrealistic. This is not to suggest that the CFS model does not have worth, indeed in many countries *certain aspects* of the model have successfully influenced policy and have been scaled up. UNICEF acknowledges and understands these issues and aims to assist with drawing upon the CFS approach to ‘test’ what is possible with a view to extracting workable components. It will be important to quickly develop and disseminate a framework for rigorous piloting of CFS for the MQP – this implies going beyond regular implementation of the CFS approach in model schools. The specific issue of scaling up through pilots is discussed in more detail in section 6.3.

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9 CFS is due to be expanded to 50 ‘model schools’ through the Schools for Africa initiative funded through UNICEF project modalities.
There is sometimes a tendency for UNICEF to strongly advocate its policy and strategy approaches in its focus areas with insufficient attention to key factors which will determine whether an intervention is likely to achieve systemic results. In some cases, partners (Government and Development Partners) have expressed the view that UNICEF sometimes ‘pushes’ particular approaches and/or areas in a fairly prescriptive manner and with insufficient appreciation and analysis of key issues and other priorities. The perception was expressed by Government in a number of countries that UNICEF has a tendency to follow generic approaches emanating from global or regional level with insufficient flexibility and responsiveness to provide support in the ways and in areas that match Government policy priorities.

In one case, concern was expressed from both Government and Development Partners representatives that UNICEF had arrived at the ‘11th hour’ of an ongoing sector policy formulation process, with limited prior engagement, and insisted on inclusion of a number of additional areas with limited appreciation of analysis and discussions on prioritization. In addition to possible policy overload this may lead to distortion of priorities and dilution of priority programme implementation.

This is not to say that UNICEF should not advocate for particular policy areas or approaches. However, it is saying that UNICEF needs to come to table well informed of sector-wide issues and with evidence based analysis to support its policy advocacy - and must ensure more consistent participation.

As regards specific areas, it is noted that the new MTSP states that UNICEF should begin to consider support to secondary level education. At present, in many of the ESA countries, secondary gross enrolment rates are well below 20%. Furthermore, the number of primary school leavers is likely to double or even triple over the next few years as a result of universal primary education. Clearly the MDG on eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education will be unobtainable without expanded secondary enrolment. In addition, the MDG on universal primary school access and completion is dependent upon on increasing transition rates in the sense that limited opportunity for progression to secondary education will reduce the rationale/incentive for retention in upper primary levels.

The MTSP identifies the rationale for UNICEF support as; a) in many countries basic education encompasses lower secondary education, b) many of the health benefits associated with education are found at secondary level and c) secondary level education presents an opportunity to transform gender parity into gender equity. Secondary education plays a key role in socializing youth and providing a basis for behaviour change and determining future opportunities – all of which can have a positive impact on economic and social well-being with resultant gains in reducing poverty.

The UNICEF widening of scope is appropriate and will no doubt be welcome in the light of the plans for considerable expansion and improvement of secondary education outlined in most ESA sector plans. There are a number of priority areas where UNICEF could assist. Support should focus on technical support to policy development including possible pilot initiatives. Areas where UNICEF might build upon existing comparative advantage include girls’ education and curriculum/teacher development focused on lifeskills in respect to HIV/AIDS, health and nutrition. In addition there will be a need for policy analysis in respect to financing the expansion of secondary education including issues of equitable access for girls’ and disadvantaged children. It should be recognized that engagement in policy development for increased resources for expanding secondary education is important in protecting investments in primary education. It will be essential that expansion of
secondary education complements rather than competes with a continued focus on primary education.

5.3 Development of SWApS

Whilst UNICEF is rarely involved in facilitating the initiation of SWApS it is often quick to get involved, at least to some degree. Typically, other Development Partners will take a more prominent role based on experience and capacity. Also, UNICEF’s particular mandate, and the focus and type of support it provides, leads to a perception amongst other partners, and also internally, that it might not be best placed to undertake a prominent role in this area. This view is largely based on the perception that UNICEF has limited experience and capacity in support to sector-wide policy issues and that it operates through and only has experiences of traditional project type mechanisms. Both of these characteristics are key areas related to UNICEF’s ability to effectively support SWApS/SDP’s and are discussed throughout the study. At the same time, UNICEF has made effective contributions to SWAp development in some countries.

Firstly, how and in what circumstances can UNICEF add value to the development of SWAp mechanisms? Some staff interviewees stated that UNICEF had been a key player in ‘starting’ the SWAp, and in some cases the prominent player. Whilst not refuting this, such statements tended to be anecdotal and/or lacking in substantive evidence. In some cases this may have been due to the fact that the interviewee was not in post when the SWAp was initiated. No examples of documented case studies or evaluation describing and analysing such a role were made available.

However, a notable example of exposing Government to SWAp is in Lesotho, where UNICEF funded the participation of senior MoE officers in the UNICEF Regional SWAp Workshop. Both the MoE and a Development Partner stated this was a very important step in Lesotho initiating the SWAp and there is an opportunity for UNICEF to provide greater ongoing support to the process.

It is difficult to analyse a process through a few short interviews, with limited evidence and without ‘on the ground’ experience. However, the authors own experiences of working in support of the Cambodia education SWAp, whilst not in the ESA region, can provide some useful lessons in how UNICEF can provide effective support. The case study illustrates this.

**UNICEF’s role in facilitating the development of an Education SWAp in Cambodia**

Following years of conflict and instability, during which development assistance was focused on emergency, relief and rehabilitation, Cambodia initiated the development of a sector-wide approach in education in 2000. UNICEF was a critical player in facilitating this process.

The process was supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and UNICEF (funded by Sida), through provision of technical advisory and capacity building assistance. A specific (Sida funded) component of the UNICEF programme focused on ‘SWAp readiness’. Key aspects included an initial series of SWAp workshops and ongoing medium term technical advisory support focused on donor-ministry coordination and partnership processes, and change management, sector-wide planning and monitoring in the central ministry and provincial education offices. This support has continued through the period 2000-2005.

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10 It would be useful for UNICEF to think about and document some experiences in this area within ESA.
UNICEF is the deputy chair of the funding agency group and the co-chair (with the EC and the ministry) of the ministry-funding agency committee responsible for specific sector-wide planning and coordination. There is no doubt that throughout this process, senior UNICEF education staff have been the Development Partner representatives on the ground (the ADB staff adviser is based in Manila) who have had the greatest understanding of, and role in facilitating, the SWAp (the EC has taken an increasingly prominent role). Amongst the development community, UNICEF was invariably the first point of call for donor missions, consultants etc, requiring information on education SWAp and sector-wide reform.

Key results:
- Establishment of SWAp partnership, consultation and coordination mechanisms (Statement of Intent, Partnership Principles, sector reviews, central and provincial consultation mechanisms, sector reviews, information dissemination etc)
- Enhanced Government and Development Partner engagement in SWAp and understanding of key issues (including funding modalities, public financial management and the role of TA and capacity building approaches) through various workshops/seminars and papers
- Improved sector-wide planning, management and monitoring (including a well-functioning EMIS) at central and provincial level
- Increased levels and more appropriate use of external assistance to education (including through advice to other agency programme design and development including EC targeted budget support to basic education)
- All of the above have contributed to improved sector performance and outcomes, particularly in basic education

Lessons
- UNICEF can add considerable value to SWAp development, particularly where Development Partners usually associated with this role are not supporting education or are unable/unwilling to provide such support
- The use of other resources (OR) can be flexibly and strongly aligned to SWAp development – in this case Sida effectively operated as a type of ‘silent partner’ through UNICEF
- By supporting SWAp development and sector-wide planning processes UNICEF can contribute to ‘leveraging’ external assistance in support of basic education (not for direct assistance to UNICEF programmes but clearly consistent with UNICEF objectives)
- Successful support is likely to lead to a reduction in funding over time – future redirection of Sida assistance to budget support when ‘SWAp’ is considered to be sufficiently institutionalised was always understood – despite directly contributing to this reduction, UNICEF considered this to be an appropriate strategy
- Support to processes which are usually considered to be outside UNICEF’s priority concerns or areas for direct assistance can yield significant results consistent with UNICEF objectives – a sector-wide view is essential
- Openness and flexibility in working with Government and DP’s in new areas is essential – in this case working with the ministry and ministry TA (ADB funded) in responding to priorities and collaboratively designing and implementing an appropriate programme of UNICEF support to SWAp
- UNICEF will build invaluable experience, capacity and credibility through such support (which cannot be built through a sole reliance on project support)
- Undertaking such a role requires considerable individual staff vision, commitment, flexibility, and willingness to learn by doing and to take calculated risks – by the staffs own admission they knew nothing about SWAp prior to 2000 and managed this support whilst also managing more traditional UNICEF field based project support
- This case seems to be a very real example of the UNICEF concept of ‘accompanying’ Government – responding to needs and building capacity and momentum for reform
- UNICEF should learn from, share and use such experiences and capacity to build its own and others capacity, to enhance its performance and to share good practice
- UNICEF should endeavour to transfer such in-house skills and experience to ‘SWAp countries’ - the two staff involved in this case are now working in countries (one in ESA) which do not use SWAp and are unlikely to in the near future
UNICEF should provide flexibility, space and incentives for its staff to contribute to processes that can facilitate much greater and wider impact than that achieved solely through project interventions in UNICEF ‘core’ areas.

How might this example be useful in ESA? It is recognized that the particular opportunity presented in Cambodia is different in some significant respects from the situation in many ESA countries. In many countries SWAps are already well developed. Other Development Partners which are likely to take such a role, and have considerable experience, are more widely operating in many countries. In such cases there will not be a rationale for such a sophisticated or intensive role for UNICEF, e.g. in Uganda. Consideration of comparative advantage and best use of UNICEF resources in relation to other external support will be appropriate.

Notwithstanding this, there are significant opportunities. Firstly, there are some countries in the region where a) SWAp development is in the initial stages and b) fewer Development Partners likely to take a role in facilitating SWAp are represented (these two characteristics usually correspond).

In particular, there is an opportunity for UNICEF to provide significant support to SWAp development processes in Lesotho (in cooperation with DCI). As noted, it has already supported the ministry in initial thinking in embarking on a SWAp. Whilst the small number of Development Partners in Lesotho and the relatively low aid dependency perhaps provides less rationale and momentum for developing certain aspects of SWAp related to external assistance, support to sector-wide planning and management processes is a priority.

In Malawi, given the relatively long time it has taken to develop and institutionalize effective SWAp processes, there may be value in considering in more detail how UNICEF might support approaches to facilitate and take the process forward with Government and other Development Partners. In Burundi, the Government intends to develop an education sector plan in 2006, though SWAp processes. UNICEF is the chair of the education development partners group and is in a strong position to take a prominent role in developing the SWAp from the outset. Whilst the author is not familiar with the status of developing an education SWAp in Eritrea and in Madagascar, they are at a relatively early stage and there may be a significant role for UNICEF.

Secondly, even in countries where SWAp processes are relatively well developed and have largely been facilitated by other Development Partners, there is usually an ongoing need to further develop mechanisms and to strengthen capacity. There is no reason why UNICEF cannot contribute to such initiatives. As with the Cambodia case, support will be most appropriate and useful when it focuses on institutional development for sector-wide planning and monitoring, including at decentralized levels.

A view does exist (and was expressed by some Development Partner representatives) that UNICEF has more of a role during early stages of a SWAp when it is less mature, but that as it develops, particularly in relation to funding mechanisms and more advanced sector-wide policy development, UNICEF’s value added declines. One Development Partner representative suggested that UNICEF gets ‘lost’ in mature SWAps. This tendency can be observed in some cases and it is a potential danger. However, it is not a given, and if UNICEF can adapt and enhance its effectiveness in areas outlined in this study, there is no reason why this should be the case. It is important to emphasise that this does not mean UNICEF must change...
its funding mechanisms to budget support or pooled funding – an issue discussed in section 8.

In most countries UNICEF has participated in consultations to agree specific partnership mechanisms (e.g. Partnership Principles, Statements of Intent, Codes of Conduct etc) and in most countries has been quick to sign up to such agreements. This has been important in signaling UNICEF’s commitment to partnership within SWAs. Such agreements typically outline frameworks and principles for: sector consultations and review; coordination and information sharing; alignment and harmonization of external support; and aid negotiations and use of aid modalities. The respective responsibilities of Government and Development Partners (and sometimes other actors) are usually outlined. Whilst the study does not assess UNICEF’s performance in adhering to specific agreements, it does address UNICEF’s approach in respect to key issues typically included in such agreements.

5.4 A seat at the policy table…?

A very common concern and frustration expressed by UNICEF staff is that UNICEF is increasingly marginalized in policy dialogue because they cannot compete with donors who are leveraging policy influence on the back of large funding commitments. In fact this was raised in all countries with the exception of Lesotho. Without entering into a detailed discussion on conditionality it should be acknowledged that external support is never entirely unconditional11 (including UN support). At the same time, as part of the new aid agenda, there has been significant progress in introducing lighter ‘conditionality’ and harmonizing and simplifying systems around nationally owned plans. This has encouraged common Government - Development Partner consensus on priorities and in general had reduced the incidence and severity of ‘disagreements’ on policy.

Notwithstanding this, it would be wrong to dismiss the likelihood that in some cases Development Partners providing larger funding commitments will find it easier to get to the policy table and have greater opportunities for policy dialogue. Whilst we might instinctively baulk at this, such Develop Partners are increasingly coming to the table with high level and high quality technical advice. A constructive approach will be to focus on how UNICEF can do the same. There are examples of this, however as noted, UNICEF recognizes that policy dialogue needs to improve. Recommendations on how it can do this are outlined throughout the study, primarily through greater programme focus and enhanced appreciation of wider issues, underpinned by human resource and capacity development.

It is somewhat ironic that in some countries UNICEF staff complain that they are marginalized and not listened to and/or they do not have a seat at the table, but at the same time Government and Development Partners have expressed frustration that UNICEF staff attendance and participation in consultative mechanisms has been very irregular. The overwhelming view expressed by partners is that they want UNICEF at the table and that they want to hear (and read) about UNICEF’s perspectives and what they have learned that might inform policy/strategy development. The view was also expressed that there is a tendency in some countries for UNICEF only to participate in discussions related to their own interests and in some cases only to attend when such issues are on the agenda.

It is recognized that this is to some extent anecdotal, however the perception exists and there is truth in it. UNICEF staff themselves have said that they often cannot attend consultation meetings due to other priorities. For example in one country, the Head of Education expressed frustration at not being able to attend recent external consultative meetings looking at the HIV/AIDS strategy in education and Curriculum Reform (both highly relevant to the UNICEF programme), and a ‘critical’ education budget review meeting. The chair of the Development Partner group noted this, and has the perception that UNICEF is more interested in doing its ‘own business’ than participating in sector-wide consultation. Inability to attend was attributed to internal work pressures. It was also commented by both Government and Development Partners, in more than one country, that UNICEF sometimes send relatively junior staff to ‘high level’ meetings who are unable to effectively engage.

At the risk of stating the obvious (but it needs to be plainly stated), UNICEF cannot provide well-informed, high quality and valuable contributions to policy dialogue if it does not obtain and/or have the time to analyse the documents and to turn up at the meetings. In addition to missed opportunities, where policy engagement is compromised there is a risk of inappropriate UNICEF support both at the level of basic coordination and rushed and/or uninformed policy/strategy interventions. On basic coordination and information sharing, frustration was expressed by Development Partners in some countries that UNICEF are inconsistent in sharing information on their support and that there is a tendency to arrange events (workshops etc) that clash with important consultations.

Time is recognized as a fundamental constraint to UNICEF engagement in policy dialogue and this is discussed in section 10. As regards the transaction costs of multiple consultation fora, opinions differ considerably as to whether transaction costs have reduced or increased. A common view is that they are likely to be higher during the early stages of a SWAp but will decrease as the SWAp develops. It is most appropriate to consider this relative to the reduction in transaction costs associated with a reduction in project modalities and greater use of Government systems. Some UNICEF staff seem to see the issue of transaction costs in fundamentally the wrong way around. Views were expressed that the increased requirement for participation in SWAp consultative processes including policy/strategy dialogue was a burden on their time that is better used for project management.

5.5 Inter-sectoral policy processes

A major UNICEF comparative advantage is its experience and knowledge of working in, and facilitating linkages between, different sectors. This is guided by its four focus areas outlined in the draft MTSP 2006-2009:

- Young child survival and development
- Basic education and gender equality
- HIV/AIDS and children
- First call for children in policies, laws and budgets

In addressing these areas UNICEF has developed partnerships with, and works in support of, a wide range of actors. In Government this typically includes, at central and decentralized levels: ministries of education, health, gender/social development, water, youth, justice, planning and finance; sectoral institutions (e.g. Curriculum Development); commissions (e.g. HIV/AIDS) and other relevant Government bodies.
UNICEF also works extensively with Development Partners, NGO’s, civil society, and national parliaments on issues guided by the focus areas.

A key UNICEF strategy is to work in a ‘joined up’ manner by facilitating integration of different sectoral policies and initiatives. In particular, promoting knowledge and practice of how certain sector issues can be advanced through actions in or with another sector. This is guided by a holistic view of the child. For example, the role of the education sector in promoting and delivering health and nutrition for children. UNICEF track record and results in inter-sectoral policy support is impressive. A particularly good example is provided below:

**Improving Water and Sanitation Facilities in Schools**

Provision of safe water and sanitation facilities in schools plays a major role in removing barriers to education access, particularly for girls, and enhancing education quality. Improved hygiene will help to reduce disease and improve conditions for better nutrition. In particular, provision of separate and sufficient sanitation facilities for girls will encourage greater attendance.

UNICEF has played a major role (in all countries in the study) in advocating for the provision of water and sanitation facilities in schools. Strategies typically involve a combination of ‘demonstration’ through UNICEF supported projects (often as part of a Child Friendly School model), and policy analysis and advocacy. Project support and policy advocacy is invariably underpinned by sensitisation/awareness initiatives to enhance understanding and practice in the use of water and sanitation facilities. Support is often provided within a wider process of assisting with the development of a School Health Policy.

At the policy/strategy level key results have been the adoption of national guidelines/standards for provision of water and sanitation in all school construction and rehabilitation. This had led (and will lead) to greater provision of facilities thus contributing to improved access, reduced incidence of disease etc.

UNICEF has provided technical support combined with evidence based advocacy, across different ministries in accordance with responsibilities for water and education. For example, in Ethiopia, UNICEF has participated in the National Working Group on Water, with the two primary Government ministries responsible, water and health, but also facilitating participation from the ministry of education. UNICEF is supporting a baseline assessment of water and sanitation facilities in 13,000 schools with the intention of scaling this up nationally. UNICEF is working closely with the ministry of education to promote the importance of water and sanitation, and is specifically using EMIS to improve data collection, monitoring and planning. The assessment has the potential to form the basis of a comprehensive and integrated national strategy for provision of water and sanitation in schools.

Other examples include contributing to policy and strategy processes in Mozambique where water and sanitation facilities are now incorporated into standard school design and tendering, and similarly in Uganda where it has been institutionalized and scaled up through the Government managed School Facilities Grant.

The use of SWAp provides increased opportunities for achieving results through inter-sectoral policy work in the sense that improved sector policy, planning and aid management processes, and resulting prioritization of resources, should enable more effective collaboration between sectors. Collaboration is of course likely to be easier if all the sectors related to an issue are using SWAp and processes are well developed (and this is not always the case). Facilitating inter-sectoral collaboration is a key role for UNICEF (and other partners). This is typically done through inter-ministerial participation in key policy/strategy consultation and formulation processes.
Whilst by no means new, there is increasing attention on the need to address issues related to marginalized and vulnerable children (MVC’s)\textsuperscript{12} through multi-dimensional and inter-sectoral approaches to social protection. A recent study commissioned by UNICEF ESARO reviews social protection mechanisms geared to improved access and retention\textsuperscript{13}. The study outlines the need for additional initiatives and programmes to provide increased support to vulnerable groups and emphasises that whilst other Government departments might deal with social protection in general, the education sector must take responsibility for specific measures. The study provides examples of specific programmes and also a categorization of interventions that have education benefit as the primary and the secondary outcome. The key recommendation is to develop strategic and coordinated combinations of interventions – ‘an integrated basket of support’ – for mainstreaming and scaling up.

Setting aside specific policy and technical approaches, what are the implications of such an approach with respect to the new development and aid agenda, including SWAps? Firstly, greater attention to MVC’s is a critical area for meeting the MDG’s and reducing poverty, and in general, is not currently being sufficiently addressed through sector level interventions. Secondly, policy, planning, implementation and monitoring (including in relation to external assistance) should be subject to the same basic principles and practices of development and aid effectiveness that are applied to sector development (i.e. comprehensive nationally owned policy and planning, and harmonised and aligned external assistance including reduction/avoidance of fragmented support, and using Government systems). In this respect, the inter-sectoral nature of this type of social protection poses considerable challenges.

The terminology (sometimes suggested) of a ‘multi-sector SWAp’, seems cumbersome (and a contradiction in terms). It might imply the establishment of substantial new public sector policy, management and implementation structures which in addition to creating significant administrative and transaction costs may militate against mainstreaming social protection within established structures. Notwithstanding this, depending on specific country context, there may be a case for establishing specific bodies for policy oversight, coordination and monitoring (e.g. as with HIV/AIDS commissions) or rethinking the remit of and strengthening existing Government departments (e.g. ministries with responsibility for social welfare, children etc).

A key issue, in particular with respect to external assistance, will be to ensure clarity of Government responsibility at all levels, including processes for negotiation, planning and financing. It is essential that all expenditures including external finance are captured within Government budgetary processes, including avoidance of double-counting (a risk with inter-sectoral programmes). This is will help to facilitate strong linkages between policy and resource allocation including results based budgeting, and monitoring the effectiveness and efficiency of spending.

There is currently much discussion on establishing a minimum package of social protection for MVC’s to be primarily implemented through cash transfer (e.g. for funding essentials such as food, shelter and clothing). A companion study (to that

\textsuperscript{12}This includes Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC’s), an area of increasing attention. The term MVC’s recognises the need to also include non-orphans (and the fact that as a generic group not all orphans are necessarily deprived in aspects relating to poverty).

mentioned above) on cash transfers for social protection is forthcoming and should provide useful analysis. In addition to articulating policy rationale and goals, it will be important that strategy development work focuses on mechanisms for planning and implementing such interventions.

Overall, it will be important to facilitate mainstreaming of social protection issues within sector processes, e.g. education sector plans. This will in many cases necessitate a ‘widening’ of what is considered the mandate of a particular sector. It will also require concerted efforts for consensus and coordination amongst the international development community. Facilitating effective inter-ministerial cooperation is a particular challenge. An important consideration will be the time and technical constraints to Government staff engaging in inter-sectoral processes, and Development Partners need to be aware of this. In particular, the likely requirements for enhanced technical capacity and also increased transaction costs, in contexts where capacity for sector development is often perceived to be lacking.

Given UNICEF’s mandate and inter-sectoral experience, the increasing focus on social protection for MVC’s is a key area where UNICEF can add considerable value. The analysis and lessons highlighted for sector policy processes are equally applicable to inter-sectoral processes. Inter-sectoral strategies (including social protection) can be addressed at a high level through national poverty reduction strategies and the role of UNICEF in this is discussed below.

5.6 Wider policy processes – Poverty Reduction Strategies

Consistent with its mandate in social sector development, including its cross-sectoral focus on issues such as human rights and community participation, UNICEF has a potentially significant role and value added in supporting poverty reduction strategies. An intensification of UNICEF’s current level of engagement in poverty reduction strategy formulation and monitoring is strongly recommended (as it is in the IHSD study).

UNICEF is involved in supporting poverty reduction strategy processes in all countries in the study, and to differing degrees. Engagement in Mozambique demonstrates how UNICEF has the potential to add particular value in PRSP’s through poverty analysis and monitoring.

**Poverty Analysis and Monitoring in Mozambique**

The Government of Mozambique and Development Partners have established extensive processes for technical analysis, formulation and monitoring of the PARPA (poverty reduction strategy) through a series of sector and cross-sectoral working groups.

UNICEF is a member of the health, HIV/AIDS, water, education, social action and poverty analysis and monitoring working groups. UNICEF has been very active through its Social Policy section in supporting poverty analysis and monitoring. More specifically, it has assisted in analysis and assessment of the poverty line with a particular focus on children. Use of (reportedly good) national statistics has strengthened this process. This has significant potential to lead to a more sophisticated and multi-dimensional view of child poverty resulting in enhanced policy, strategy and resource allocation in this area. The final draft of the PARPA was considered to be very child friendly.

PARPA engagement was a clearly stated priority for the whole office. In addition to the Social Policy engagement at the macro level, all programmes gave significant input to their sectors, and worked with social policy to ensure a strong and coherent Human Capital
chapter (encompassing all the social sectors). In Education specifically, UNICEF took the lead in coordinating the inputs from the education cooperating partners, and worked with a Ministry counterpart to draft the education section. This resulted in a strong focus on reduction of gender, regional and socio-economic disparities in education.

Clearly the PARPA will set the framework for policy and resource prioritization within social sectors. Key lessons are that UNICEF can add value to high level national policy processes through provision of technical expertise in the areas of its comparative advantage and that these processes present a major opportunity for advocacy for child rights, WFFC and the MDGs.

Notwithstanding the above, there are some factors in Mozambique which present challenges for UNICEF in contributing to effective national level policy dialogue. Government – Development Partner ‘high-level’ dialogue is primarily undertaken through the Programme Aid Partnership (PAP) arrangement incorporating a ‘G17’ of PAP donors (most of whom provide budget support). UN agency engagement is through observer status representation of the United Nations Resident Coordinator (UNDP Representative). It is suggested that the issue is not about getting UNICEF into the PAP group but to ensure more effective dialogue and coordination within the UNDG agencies to deliver high quality policy inputs through the observer status. Limited success in doing this was reported by UNICEF staff and is also noted in the Scanteam study.

A significant opportunity for UNICEF to support the development and monitoring of poverty reduction strategies is through engagement in MDG needs assessment and costing processes. Whilst such processes seem to be at an embryonic stage, UNICEF is ‘gearing up’ to contribute in some countries where this is happening (e.g. in Malawi, Mozambique and Rwanda).

Within high level policy dialogue it is increasingly important to understand and engage in financing and budgetary issues. This includes analysis of national and sector level budgets, MTEF’s, sector financing plans, budget outturns, expenditure reporting etc. To do this effectively, a basic understanding of public financial management systems including budgetary allocation, budget execution, accounting, reporting and audit processes is necessary. This is recognised as a major area of weakness which prevents UNICEF from making credible inputs to dialogue on resource allocation including advocacy for scaling up implementation of UNICEF priority concerns. In one country UNICEF were not invited to a Development Partner budget execution review meeting because it was considered that they would not be prepared, would not understand and would have nothing useful to contribute.

Some general observations arising from discussions are worthy of note. Firstly, UNICEF engagement in poverty reduction strategies is mixed but generally limited. The specific contribution of education staff/sections has in most cases not been significant. Secondly, coordination both within the UNICEF office (between education, other sectors and the programme level) and between UNDG agencies (through which contributions are often taken to Government and other partners) needs to be strengthened. Notwithstanding the latter point, a very positive move towards greater harmonization of the UNDAF to national poverty reduction strategies (including content and timing) is planned in a number of countries. The intention to introduce common UN country plans (as opposed to separate agency plans) within the next two to three years is similarly welcome.

Finally, the fundamental challenge for UNICEF to more effectively engage in high level policy processes will be to deliver higher quality advice. Whilst its technical capacity and its operations remain primarily focused on project implementation this will not be possible. That is where other partners see UNICEF’s current strength
(whether or not they regard project implementation as a significant role given changing aid modalities). However, particularly at the sector level, partners generally want and expect greater policy engagement from UNICEF. At the broader level (e.g. poverty reduction strategies, governance, public expenditure planning and management) this is less clear, but in many cases it is apparent that there is less demand, from Government and Development Partners for UNICEF to take a prominent role.
6. Project Approach

6.1 Projects to Policy...?

As noted, the major constraint to effective policy engagement is the overwhelming orientation of UNICEF support, operations and capacity on project implementation. The new MTSP recognizes this and outlines, at least to some extent, a change in direction.

‘the shift towards a greater emphasis on ‘upstream’ support to national policy, capacity and partnerships for scaled up programme delivery may, in some cases, entail a reduction of support to smaller-scale project activities. This should also lead to a major reduction in the demands on staff and counterpart time for small scale project management. It will also demand that UNICEF sharpen its prioritization of cooperation areas…’

and

‘Support for small-scale project implementation … will continue to be significant in some situations, such as emergency response and post-crisis transition situations.’

A scaling down and refocusing of project implementation has a number of benefits (some are potential benefits dependent on complementary actions). In particular:

- Releasing staff time and capacity for policy engagement and advocacy as discussed – coupled with measures to strengthen capacity

- Reducing the transaction costs of Government involvement in project implementation, including financial administration

- Alignment to Government aid policy preferences (the reduction in the use of parallel project systems is consistent with Government aid policy or expressed preferences in all of the countries in the study)

- Greater concentration on fewer areas will provide the potential for better designed pilot projects, more systematic lesson learning and scaling up

- A move away from small scale service delivery approaches to more strategic cooperation

However it should be recognised that there are organizational issues that are likely to make this shift in emphasis more difficult than might seem.

Firstly, the nature of UNICEF’s funding sources constrains the extent to which a move away from traditional project implementation can be realized. The majority of UNICEF’s funding in ESA is from other organizations (Other Resources – OR) based on specific agreements which are usually earmarked to project implementation activities. Regular Resources (RR) which the MTSP notes ‘will allow UNICEF to distribute funds based on local needs rather than special interests’, are limited. A

ESARO has the highest level of OR globally. The average global figure was 60% in 2004 whilst in some countries in ESA OR accounts for around 80% of the UNICEF country budget. The MTSP recognizes the need to address this imbalance and aims to increase multi-year donor RR funding commitments (thus also improving predictability of funding).
large number of posts are funded from OR (to manage the projects). This poses a major difficulty – there is limited flexibility in the use of funds, and limited alternative funding sources, to support a shift from project implementation to policy work.

A number of staff pointed out the irony in the fact that a significant proportion of OR is still coming from donors who have themselves reduced the use of project modalities and moved into budget support and pooled funding arrangements. Whilst it might demonstrate confidence in UNICEF as a project implementation agency they are often the same donors who are critical of the UNICEF project approach on the ground.

As regards the use of OR, it will be important to negotiate agreements that allow for greater flexibility in the use of funds. In some cases this will require ‘educating’ funding organizations on how UNICEF can best achieve results within the context of new development and aid approaches. UNICEF should also be conscious of the ‘danger’ in raising funds for projects that are not well aligned to Government priorities and/or will be used in ways contrary to good practice in aid effectiveness and SWAp.

It was stated that there are instances of UNICEF turning down funds for this reason although it should be recognised that organizational incentives are likely to discourage this. The Cambodia case is a good, but seemingly rare example of using OR for flexible policy engagement in SWAp (and it is recognized that Sida are a ‘SWAp friendly’ donor).

Secondly, the orientation and profile of UNICEF staff is heavily skewed to project management – as that is largely what they have employed to do. It should be acknowledged that this is the role that the majority of project officer staff (including some section heads) are comfortable with and what many would prefer to continue to do. This is a rational view and institutional resistance to change should not be underestimated. An element of ‘leaping into the unknown’ with associated uncertainty about capacity, credibility and future funding is likely to make the transition difficult. Business as usual might be considered a more attractive option.

UNICEF stated on a number of occasions that if we scale down our projects and leave an area, we would be considered as deserting or letting down Government. The Government view on whether or not UNICEF should reduce project implementation was mixed. At the centre the view tended towards yes, but with some exceptions. This is not to say that the central Governments do not want UNICEF projects but there is a strong view that a) they want projects to be run as pilots not ongoing service delivery and b) they do want a significant move away from projects to other aid modalities. At district, and particularly at the school level, it is overwhelming no – they want more support. Whilst it is understood that exiting can difficult, particularly for staff working closely with district/school/community level partners, this should not in itself be used as a reason to continue. Decisions must be based on a strategic analysis of the value and impact of implementing projects, in relation to the issues discussed.

It is worth noting that in some countries project implementation will significantly increase, for example with the start up of the Schools for Africa project initiatives in Malawi, Mozambique and Rwanda in 2005/06.

UNICEF has a comparative advantage and a critical role in providing support in its focus areas in response to emergency and humanitarian crisis. It is recognized that UNICEF must maintain its capacity to respond to emergencies and crises, and this will include project management and implementation as necessary. This is not inconsistent with SWAp. It might be appropriate for the UN to consider specifically
how SWAp processes might assist in strengthening responses to emergency and crisis.

6.2 Alignment of Projects

A fundamental principle of SWAp is that all external assistance will be aligned to the Government sector plan. The UNICEF SWAp guidelines emphasise that the UNICEF programme should support the sector plan but at the same time state that UNICEF will provide:

‘Support to programmes and activities which are complementary to, or a formal part of the SWAp…including issues which may fall outside of the immediate scope of the sector-wide programme’

and that,

‘support…to local, district or regional components of SWAps…and…pilot and research activities agreed with the relevant national partner…may be viewed by the government as lying within, or alternatively as additional or complementary, to the official SWAp framework’.

(Author’s emphasis)

These statements are not further clarified, and there is some ambiguity, however it is recommended that this be amended in the guidelines. It is important to emphasise that decentralized programmes are as much part of a sector plan as central initiatives, and arguably more important as they constitute the majority of service delivery. As such, decentralized projects are equally accountable to the alignment principle. Pilot research activities should be included in sector plans (or associated operational annual work plans). If the guidance is referring to inter and cross-sectoral support then that should be clarified however significant inter/cross sectoral activity should also be included in sector plans. Whilst probably not intended as such, these statements could be perceived as an internal ‘get-out’ clause from alignment of UNICEF support to sector programmes.

It is suggested that the issue of alignment of project type support (from any Development Partner) can sometimes be difficult and even contentious. The following box outlines some observations on this.

**Broad policy statements, priorities and alignment**

It is suggested that in general, there is insufficient analysis, debate and negotiation amongst Government and Development Partners about what alignment really means in relation to both the general and specific focus of external support in respect to priorities.

In some cases, the practice of applying the concept of ensuring support is ‘on plan’ seems to go little further than endorsing, or in some cases tolerating, a project that’s main focus coincides with a high level and broad policy/strategy statement and associated aims within a sector plan. That is a relatively simple bridge to cross as this approach tends to justify almost any intervention in, for example, primary education, as being ‘on plan’. Usually there is then a ‘coordination’ check to ensure that the project does not clearly duplicate another. After that there is often wide scope and flexibility in project design, activity planning, geographical targeting and resource allocation. It might be reassuring to many that Development Partner X has a project focusing on Y, the project objectives match Y high level objectives in the sector plan and it is not providing the same things in the same place.
A (credible) sector plan must include a medium term financing plan outlining the resources required to implement strategies and programmes. Most sector plans include a financing gap, usually with the assumption or intention that external assistance will close a significant part of the gap. This approach has significant value as an argument for mobilizing additional (domestic and/or external) resources to implement priorities. Indeed, what justification is there for additional resources if the sector plan does not outline why they are needed? However, as we know from experience, financing gaps are rarely fully closed and in many cases they are barely closed at all. The bottom line is that funding and implementing one thing will mean that something else cannot be funded and implemented.

The key point is that if the sector plan does not clearly prioritise what should and should not be funded/implemented and there are significant gaps how do we know what part of the gap to fill and in what way?

The solution to the alignment issue is to develop a well prioritized plan and ensure optimum use of external resources (in terms of focus, coverage and modality) in support of the priorities. Of course this is not easy. It is not possible and would be inappropriate from a brief visit to make an assessment of which plans might be better prioritized, other than to observe that a) the Uganda approach seems particularly strong and b) that in some countries the process tends towards a Development Partner simply choosing something in the plan and filling a gap, with the full agreement of the Government. In reality a project gap filling approach seldom sufficiently fills the gap it intends to. It is suggested that UNICEF and other Development Partners should be more aware of such issues and seek to support greater prioritization and dialogue on how external assistance can best support a sector plan. However, arguably, a plan that allows a ‘pick and choose’ approach suits some Development Partners. One way to address the issue would be for Government to clearly outline in sector plans, areas that are not a priority for assistance.

In terms of UNICEF support, opinions were mixed as to whether it is aligned or not. In most cases from looking at a sector plan and the UNICEF work plans it can be said to be aligned and all UNICEF staff were confident in stating that support is ‘on plan’. Some Government and Development Partners representatives think it is aligned and some think it is not. It is suggested that in the absence of a more sophisticated approach to prioritization and alignment, the question cannot be meaningfully answered.

However it is worth making three observations. Firstly, arising from discussions on whether or not UNICEF should contribute to pooled funding mechanisms (discussed in section 8.2) a significant number of staff said no on the grounds that UNICEF would ‘lose control’ of its programme and areas we implement would be lost. A protective attitude to UNICEF priorities and approaches is not conducive to alignment. Secondly, the UNICEF programming procedures for planning and designing project support are extremely intensive and it is suggested that they are not conducive to ensuring strong ownership and alignment – this is discussed further in section 7.1. Finally, the lack of flexibility on projects funded through Other Resources is not conducive to alignment (this is not to say such projects cannot be aligned).
6.3 Projects and Scaling Up

A widely used UNICEF approach is to use demonstration projects\textsuperscript{15} to test innovative approaches through evidence based evaluation and to document lessons to inform policy development with the intention to scale up implementation. With an increased focus on sector-wide policy development and implementation, SWAPs do provide a significant opportunity for scaling up and in general the UNICEF approach seems appropriate.

There is much discussion within the organization about how to scale up\textsuperscript{16}, particularly given the fact that it is recognized that there has been limited success in doing so. For example, an evaluation of the UNICEF African Girls Education Initiative (AGEI) found that few, if any of the pilots were adopted or replicated\textsuperscript{17}. A primary concern is that design, evaluation, documentation, lesson learning and advocacy has been of insufficiently high quality to achieve results. The MTSP notes that ‘many UNICEF-assisted pilots have not been conducted with the necessary rigour. Many such projects lack a clear baseline, cost analysis or other key features.’

A fundamental question is whether UNICEF supported pilot projects are actually well designed, set up and implemented as pilots. As highlighted in the IHSD study, some partners question the extent to which innovative approaches are being used as opposed to supporting small scale service delivery through implementation of established activities and provision of inputs. In this respect, a number of partners likened UNICEF to large scale service delivery NGO. From analysis of project documents and discussion with Government staff it is suggested that these perceptions carry considerable weight.

Project support to districts, schools and communities in a particular geographical area often continues for many years (it is not uncommon for support to continue for 10+ years) throughout which some approaches may change and different strategies may be introduced. Whilst it recognized that approaches new to the context are introduced, the usually very significant provision of inputs (some school classroom construction/ rehabilitation, latrines, furniture, books, stationery etc) often seems to be the most valued component. The views of Government staff (district officers, head teachers, teachers) at the local level on the issues piloting, innovation and sustainability was mixed however there was (in many ways understandably) an overriding view that the best thing UNICEF could do would be to provide more ‘hardware’ and inputs for the foreseeable future\textsuperscript{18}.

Again, Government staff perceptions at the centre were mixed. In some cases it is not apparent that Government sees support as pilots as opposed to filling gaps in service delivery. A common view expressed by senior officers at the centre was that UNICEF projects have been operating for a long time and that we want to know what has been learned and when they will end. As noted in the discussion on policy

\textsuperscript{15} It is acknowledged that UNICEF has adopted the term demonstration projects instead of pilots. Some UNICEF staff maintain that the term ‘pilots’ is no longer appropriate because the projects being implemented in the field are for the purpose of scaling up and informing policy—upstream work. However, pilots still appear to be the dominant terminology. The concepts of trailing and demonstration are understood as strategies within or related to UNICEF ‘pilots’.

\textsuperscript{16} This was a prominent theme at the ESA SWAp workshop and various papers and ideas have been produced and discussed.


\textsuperscript{18} This is recognized as a rationale response to a visitor from ‘HQ’.
processes, Development Partners consider UNICEF’s presence and operations in the ‘field’ as a potential comparative advantage but they want to hear about its relevance to policy development.

At the same time, impact at local level within the project environment is often impressive. Typically, much of support to primary schools is based on the Child Friendly School model, and there is significant evidence to suggest that this can contribute to increased equitable access including for girls, improved learning, enhanced community participation and improvements in health. The challenge with any pilot is to consider how it can be taken to scale within a sector wide context and this necessitates rigorous analysis of how strategies and approaches might be sustained outside of the protected and artificial project environment. Key issues related to this are outlined in section 5 however it is worth re-emphasising that issues of cost and sustainable financing in relation to efficiency and competing priorities, and also institutional capacities, will be paramount.

Notwithstanding the above, some UNICEF supported programmes/projects have been successfully taken to scale. A stand out example in ESA is the Complementary Opportunities for Primary Education (COPE) programme in Uganda.

**Scaling Up Complementary Opportunities for Primary Education in Uganda**

The Government and UNICEF developed the COPE programme in 1994/95 to provide basic education to primary-age children who could not attend formal primary schools. Key aspects include: initial syllabus and teaching and learning materials development; training of COPE instructors from the community; use of targeting/selection criteria focusing on disadvantaged children; strategies for transfer/re-entry in the formal system; and vocational skills all underpinned by community participation. The programme has been funded through UNICEF with contributions from donors and UNICEF National Committees, with increasing Government contributions.

The programme has been gradually and successfully mainstreamed and scaled up. The Government took over payment of instructor salaries and routine monitoring costs around 1999. In July 2005 the Government formally announced the decision to mainstream COPE into Non-Formal Education policy/strategy as part of the education sector-wide plan. Most importantly, provision has been made to finance and implement the construction of NFE centres, provide the capitation and instructional materials grants, and to ensure all instructors are paid. Construction of teachers houses will be implemented slightly later.

It was not possible to obtain sufficient information to provide a comprehensive analysis of how mainstreaming and scaling up was achieved (partly because the current UNICEF officers are relatively new to Uganda and the relevant Government officers were not available). However, it does appear that UNICEF was conscious of the need to focus on scaling up within the Government system from the early stage of the programme. It is assumed that an important factor was the undertaking of an economic analysis of the programme in 2002. The study outlines key issues in respect to impact, costs and mainstreaming the programme into the formal system. It is also suggested that the relatively advanced nature of SWAp, including improved and prioritized sector resource planning and allocation, is likely to have set a conducive environment for scaling up.

It is strongly recommended that UNICEF undertake analysis of how UNICEF, the Government and others were able to scale up COPE (and other successes) and that this is used to inform practice more widely within UNICEF. In Tanzania there has

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been considerable success in mainstreaming and scaling up Complementary Basic Education and Training (COBET). The initiative started as a UNICEF project and has been taken on by Government including both expansion and integration of complementary systems with the formal system. UNICEF Tanzania intend to document lessons learned in respect to scaling up a pilot initiative.

Another notable example of scaling up is the Programme for the Advancement of Girls’ Education (PAGE) in Zambia. This case is briefly outlined in Section 9.1 on mainstreaming gender and girls’ education.

A further brief example from Uganda is notable as regards learning lessons and documenting for policy dialogue purposes. A study comprising case studies of the implementation of the Child Friendly School Approach in UNICEF focus districts was undertaken in early 2005. The study presents a detailed evaluation of experiences in each district using both quantitative and qualitative methods (including participatory methods). The study appears rigorous and provides potentially valuable and rich analysis. However, the study does not go beyond this in analysing implications for scaling up and extracting key lessons that might inform policy development. It has the potential to form the basis for further analysis in this respect but as it stands it is unlikely to facilitate any contribution to policy dialogue or scaling up.

It is emphasized that scaling up can only be effectively achieved through Government policy and strategy and through national systems. This is well understood by most UNICEF staff however a number of staff, particularly at the Project Officer level, think that scaling up is about increasing the funding, size and coverage of the UNICEF Country Programme. Scaling up can also be partially achieved by ‘leveraging’ support from other Development Partner programmes and UNICEF has had some successes in doing this (e.g. DCI support to expanding Break Through to Literacy in Lesotho). Pooled funding mechanisms provide a key opportunity for scaling up and this is discussed further in section 8.

As discussed, there is a tendency to continue and replicate projects. UNICEF should give greater attention to developing exit strategies including when, a) the pilot is not achieving significant results, b) the pilot has worked well in its project environment but cannot be mainstreamed or scaled up in a significant and systemic way and c) it is clear that the pilot has been or will successfully scaled up. All pilots run their course and it is important to resist the temptation to continue or in some cases replace the pilot with something similar. In some countries an approach is being piloted across many geographical areas (in a few selected districts/schools) and the rationale for the level of coverage as a pilot is questionable – if it is a pilot then could it be implemented more selectively?

During the process of mainstreaming and scaling up pilots it is important to allow for flexibility and selective use of approaches according to context, needs and realistic strategies for expansion. It has been observed by some staff that there is sometimes a tendency for UNICEF to be protective in advocating for adoption of the original or ‘pure’ approach. These issues were captured well in the phrase used at the ESA SWAp workshop - ‘UNICEF need to learn to let go’.

Finally, it is view of this study that piloting is the primary strategy that UNICEF should adopt as a link between its ‘project’ and ‘policy’ work – which should be closely integrated and in a sense are parts of the same thing\(^\text{20}\). Effective piloting will improve UNICEF’s value added and its impact in supporting policy development and scaling

\(^{20}\) Accepting the continued need for ‘service-delivery’ type projects in emergency situations.
up. This is consistent with the MTSP and a number of other internal documents. Measures to improve piloting should be undertaken within the context of recommendations to reduce the scope of policy focus and project implementation outlined in this study. The SWAp Resource Pack will include ‘training’ and materials on piloting. In addition, the existing UNICEF programming tools on pilot projects\textsuperscript{21} provide very useful guidance on the purpose of pilot projects, design considerations, implementation, evaluation and documentation – much of which is relevant and appropriate to working effectively within SWAp.

\textsuperscript{21} Chapter 6, Section 16 of \textit{UNICEF Programme Policy and Procedure Manual}. UNICEF New York. This guidance was first produced in 2004 and recently revised – some staff may be unaware of it.
7. Programming and Procedures

UNICEF has very clearly defined programme procedures which outline processes and requirements for analytical work, planning, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation and review. Some of the processes are coordinated with the other UNDG agencies. The Government participates in the majority of these processes. Comprehensive and rigorous systems are important and Government participation will strengthen the process and facilitate ownership.

However, the totality of these processes amount to a system which is extraordinarily heavy. This puts an enormous burden on UNICEF staff and also, very importantly, Government staff involved in the processes. This constrains capacity and sustains high transaction costs. In reality, it is suggested that the heavy nature of the processes actually undermines ownership because mid to senior level Government staff simply do not have time to engage in planning and review processes in a meaningful way. As regards implementation, UNICEF financial processes, including budgeting, disbursement, accounting and reporting are a severe constraint to staff engagement in more strategic work and drain the capacity of Government staff.

The UNICEF guidelines state that:

‘SWAps do not pose inherent contradictions to the standard Country Programme preparation and implementation procedures used by UNICEF’

The IHSD study questions this assertion and suggests the need for ‘lighter touch’ tools. This study does like likewise. Overall, it is strongly recommended that procedures are streamlined. A guiding principle, consistent with SWAp, is that procedures and systems should be harmonized as far as possible with Government systems.

UNICEF and other UNDG agencies increasingly recognize these problems and are taking action to simplify and harmonise procedures through UN reforms (in the context of the wider harmonization and alignment agenda). This is welcome and is likely to make a difference. At the same time, the planned reforms are unlikely to go far enough. Whilst it is understood that there are constraints to further reform in some areas, it is an area that the UN must constantly review and adapt accordingly. The following sections consider specific areas in more detail including external views on UNICEF procedures.

7.1 Analysis, Strategy Development and Planning

The UN/UNICEF five year country programme preparation includes a number of stages including:

- formulation by the UNCT and Government of a work plan for preparing the new UNCT agencies Country Programmes
- preparation of a Common Country Assessment (CCA) by UNCT and Government
- preparation of an UNDAF by UNCT
- preparation with partners of draft UNCT Country Programme Documents
• preparation by UNICEF of a Country Programme Management Plan


In addition situation analysis and strategy development is undertaken including specific research and studies. Following approval of the Country Programme an Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan is prepared (and updated annually) and Annual Project Work Plans are prepared with Government and partners.

Overall the process can take up to 18 months during which very considerable staff time and resources are taken up. Despite a genuine commitment to respond to Government needs and foster ownership, the intensely participatory nature of the process militates against this. In particular, if UN/UNICEF wish to provide support that is policy relevant then they must agree a less burdensome process with Government that will allow meaningful engagement of senior officials (who will clearly have other priorities). It is suggested that some of the Government views related to lack of UNICEF alignment with sector priorities discussed earlier are partly as a result of these heavy preparation processes.

In terms of ongoing annual work planning, project implementation and coordination with mid level staff, and staff and communities at decentralised levels, there is an appreciation of the participatory methods that UNICEF facilitates and this does promote greater ownership. This is not to say that it does not require simplification – it should be recognized that it ties up Government staff in UNICEF project implementation thus impinging on their ‘Government’ duties.

Whilst the preparation processes are still in place and used, simplification is being introduced under ongoing and planned UN reforms. UNDAF and country programmes will be the harmonized with the national planning processes, in particular poverty reduction strategies, and this is firmly planned in some countries. It appears that some stages of the process may be simplified or removed. It is also planned that UNDG agencies will move towards a Common Country Plan, it appears within three to four years (depending on country context). These reforms are likely to make a significant difference including facilitating more meaningful participation, enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of UN support and reducing the burden on Government (and the UN itself). There is no reason to suggest that these reforms might compromise the quality of analysis and planning, indeed the opposite.

7.2 Implementation Procedures

In terms of providing assistance through Government systems, a key principle of SWAp, the UNICEF approach to project management, fund disbursement, financial management and accounting presents severe problems. Whilst many UNICEF officers claim that they do not manage projects and point to the fact that a significant amount of UNICEF financial contributions are disbursed to Government bank accounts, the system has been set up parallel to the Government system, and procedures governing the system are complicated, cumbersome and time consuming.

The requirement for the Government to provide financial information and accounts in UNICEF formats (Cash Assistance to Government - CAG) and return all receipts and supporting documentation to UNICEF is burdensome. Serious concerns were expressed by senior Government staff that they are accountable to the national
Treasury for funds from UNICEF that are channeled through (separate) Government accounts but in reality they have very limited knowledge and control over how funds are planned and used – the perception is that UNICEF are largely in control. Ministries are subject to Government audit of these expenditures (as appropriation in aid), including classification and value for money. The fact that supporting documentation is held in the UNICEF office creates additional problems. These processes constitute poor practice. Given the problems outlined, the view was expressed by some senior Government staff that if UNICEF cannot use Government systems then it should stop funding through the Government budget, i.e. it is preferable that UNICEF spend the money directly.

A very common concern of both Government and UNICEF staff is that the CAG system has created substantial delays in the implementation of activities. In some cases delays have been as long as nine months to a year.

As regards funds spent directly by UNICEF, Government staff expressed concerns that they were not always provided with information and also noted difficulties in understanding and reconciling UNICEF financial reports when the information is provided. This included a lack of clarity on financial information related to intersectoral expenditures. Cases were also cited of UNICEF not providing ministries of finance with information on budgets and expenditure, clearly contradictory to Government – Development partner agreements and widely accepted good practice. In some cases concerns were expressed that UNICEF procurement was ‘overpriced’, that UNICEF ‘buy expensive things for their own districts’, and goods could be procured cheaper locally. At the same time some Government staff recognized that UNICEF procurement often did provide value for money and was quicker than Government systems. A key point is that UNICEF must ensure better information sharing and transparency.

Government officials from a senior level through to lower levels are required to spend considerable amounts of time learning (sometimes through training courses) and implementing UNICEF financial procedures. Some Government staff are specifically assigned responsibilities for UNICEF project financial management and accounting (sometimes including traveling from often remote areas of a country to submit accounts and receipts to the UNICEF office in the capital). This is an additional responsibility to their duties as civil servants in managing/administering service delivery and public finance for the education system.

No interviewees, in Government or the development partner community (to the extent that they might be aware of the system) were of the opinion that the UNICEF financial management system had any benefits in terms of sustainable capacity building for financial management. In fact the opposite view, that UNICEF systems are likely to be capacity draining, was often expressed. Requiring and training Government staff to use external agency systems and procedures does not build capacity to use Government systems.

Overall the perceptions from Government staff on UNICEF’s financial procedures are very negative. In discussions with Government staff, with a very few exceptions, reactions range from mild consternation to intense frustration. Systems were described as a ‘chronic problem’ and bureaucracy as ‘terrible’.

22 Directors of Departments, at least in some countries, are routinely contacted by UNICEF staff regarding actions required in (relatively small) budget planning and submission of CAG for liquidation.
As part of the UN Reforms, the UNDG are introducing simplified and harmonized procedures (Cash Transfers to Implementing Partners) for all UNDG agencies. Modalities to be used will be dependent upon fiduciary risk assessment of Government financial systems. This will include macro level assessment of the public financial management system using, where available, existing assessments (e.g. Public Expenditure Reviews, procurement assessments and Government audits), and micro level assessment of specific implementing partners by UN agencies. If risk is not considered to be significant then assurance will be simplified. In particular, the requirement for direct accounting against receipts and supporting documentation will be removed (i.e. documentation will remain with Government) and replaced by a system of reviews, spot checks and scheduled audits. The same system will be implemented for all UNDG agencies in a country thus harmonizing procedures (prior to this, a use of different procedures had caused additional difficulties for Government).

The introduction of this new system has the potential to reduce the burden of UN financial systems on Government. Given the severity of problems associated with the current system is it recommended that this be introduced as soon as possible in ESA countries in 2006 (subject to Government agreement). This will require joint action by UNDG agencies. It is worthy of note that a very similar system (having the same essential features) has in fact been in operation in Uganda for a few years, and whilst it has realized some benefits they do not appear to have as significant as might be expected.

Notwithstanding the likely improvements that the new system will bring, it should be recognized that the system is still a parallel system and still fundamentally inconsistent with the principle of using Government systems. A possible reduction in project implementation would in practical terms reduce the burden on Government.

Analysis and implications of the use of procedures on UNICEF staff capacity is provided in section 10.

7.3 Review Processes

A key principle of SWAp is that Development Partners should rely on Government review and evaluation processes and should not maintain separate and parallel systems. As with planning and implementation systems, the UNICEF review systems outlined in its procedures are heavy and time intensive. In particular the substantial Mid Term Review (MTR) process requiring significant Government participation, takes around one year. Again, the intensive nature of the process is likely to limit meaningful senior level Government engagement.

In addition, partners (including Government and Development Partners) and UNICEF staff have questioned the policy relevance of UNICEF Annual and Mid Term Reviews. A common concern is that evaluation and review is predominantly input–output focused and rarely generates findings of any significant value in policy development. In some cases the view was expressed (including by staff) that review has been primarily geared to organisational self assurance and raising profile.

Notwithstanding this, UNICEF is increasingly simplifying and harmonizing review systems with Government processes, consistent with good practice in SWAp. A particularly good example was described for the Malawi health sector where UNICEF use the Government annual sector review for its Annual Review purposes and the MTR is much lighter and flexible, primarily involving 'simply sitting around a table' as
opposed to more intensive processes. The office has made UNICEF health reviews much lower key and enhanced the reliance on well established Government processes. In addition to reducing transaction costs this is likely to improve the responsiveness and relevance of UNICEF planning, particularly in respect to policy issues.
8. External Assistance Modalities

As noted, SWAp is not solely about a shift in aid modalities from project to programmatic instruments. However, the transition to using modalities which rely on Government systems and procedures is a fundamental aspect of SWAp. This is particularly the case in Africa and in the countries involved in this study. Overall, there has been a very pronounced move in the aid modality preferences of Governments away from off-budget donor projects to on-budget assistance including types of pooled or basket funding modalities and direct budget support (general and sector). As experiences of using such instruments accumulates, this preference is being increasingly and more strongly articulated, even in countries that are at an early stage in using SWAp.

Progress towards this transition is variable across countries and in most cases a mix of different types of modalities exists and is accepted by Governments but with the understanding that, over time, there will be a reduction in project assistance and increased direct financing to the government budget. Whilst different countries are at different stages in this transition a significant proportion of assistance is still provided through project modalities in all countries (other than Uganda where it is minimal).

A full transition from project to budget support cannot happen overnight and may not necessarily be advisable, at least in the short to medium term. The extent and pace of transition should take into account what optimal mix of aid modalities will best sustain the momentum of the education reform process. Most importantly this will include analysis of what form of assistance will best achieve education outcomes (dependent upon a number of factors including national strategies, systems and capacities) and what is feasible in terms of external assistance within the particular context. Usually the integration of funding modalities with Government procedures is best considered as an incremental process over the medium term that may pass through a series of transitions.

However, aid modality preferences are changing quickly, largely in response to greater awareness of the limited value and the problems associated with project aid. It is worth quoting from a report on Tanzania, outlining some reasons for this increasingly prevalent view:

Do Governments need and want projects?

‘the authorities might ask themselves what they are losing if they turn down offers of this kind. Typically, these will consist of specific projects, often to be operated outside the budget and to be implemented on the basis of special implementation units manned by expatriate ‘technical assistance’ personnel, probably aided by Tanzanian officials receiving special incentive payments to give priority to the projects in question. All that we know about such aid suggests that it contributes little to the balance of payments (because of high project import content) and yields little or no net revenue to the budget and may well become a net drain upon the budget because of counterpart payments and consequential recurrent cost requirements. In addition, it contributes little to long term development because it typically has low sustainability, i.e. it represents an investment with low, perhaps zero, returns; and, because of its enclave nature, it adds little to longer term human and institutional capacities. Instead, the parallel nature of such projects tends to undermine the already weak administrative machinery. The question arises, what is lost by refusing such assistance? Evidently not much. We believe that the fears that a lot of donor assistance would be forgone are not well founded.’

8.1 Implications for UNICEF

The momentum for change is gathering pace. Furthermore, the common perception is that the trend is unlikely to be reversed (and it is difficult to envisage any fundamental turnaround). The design of programmatic instruments may further evolve and of course the extent of use in specific countries will be subject to performance and other unforeseen circumstances. However, the change in approach is here to stay. Given these changes it is increasingly important that development partners strive to better understand the new aid environment in which they are working in, and consider how they should best respond to the changing circumstances.

Amongst UNICEF staff interviewed, the understanding of different types of modalities, how they operate, the aims, rationale and possible constraints was mixed but on the whole limited. Whilst some staff (at various levels) had a good grasp of the issues, a larger number did not. Furthermore, a number of country staff who are in contact with senior Government staff and development partners are not aware or only partially aware of the type of aid modalities in use and the extent of their use in the country as a whole and in the education sector. In particular, there is a lack of knowledge about budget support.

Staff perceptions on the value of alternative modalities to projects again are mixed but overwhelmingly skeptical and in many cases negative. This was not only in relation to whether UNICEF should consider using such modalities (discussed below) but more generally. The commonly held view is that providing development financing through Government systems is ineffective due to a number of factors (most notably misuse of funds, inefficiency, lack of capacity, and because policies/strategies do not address the most important issues – which are seen to be UNICEF priorities).

The key point is that if staff are to operate effectively in the changing environment they must have a better understanding of existing and emerging thinking and approaches to aid (which are being implemented in the country and sector they work in)24. Most importantly, staff cannot effectively engage in policy dialogue and partnership/coordination initiatives without such knowledge. Whilst understanding and engaging in these issues is essential this does not necessarily mean UNICEF should use such approaches. That is a different question to which we will now turn.

8.2 To pool or not to pool…?

It is widely understood amongst UNICEF staff, Government and other development partners, that UNICEF (and other UN agencies) cannot and/or should not provide assistance through direct budget support modalities. There is less consensus of understanding as regards the use of pooled funding modalities, although the overriding balance of opinion is no. Overall, the commonly held ‘bottom line’ perception of external partners is that procedurally, UNICEF is not permitted to use either of these modalities for financial and accounting reasons. In the main, most UNICEF staff (at the country level at least) are uncertain about pooled funding.

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24 Understanding aid modalities is critical, including for the credibility of the organisation. In addition, the author cannot envisage staff engaging effectively in such environments if they fundamentally disagree with the transition to new modalities (not least as such a view is diametrically opposed to the predominant position of key partners in Government and the development community). This is not to advocate an uncritical approach to the issues.
In most countries, the issue of pooled funding was a ‘hot topic’ of discussion during
the study. This is largely because a number of the countries are in the process of
designing pooled funding mechanisms (or already have them) and secondly because
UNICEF has taken the decision to contribute to a pooled fund in Kenya and is
seriously considering the possibility in Rwanda.

In **Kenya**, at the annual sector review in May 2005, UNICEF declared a commitment
in principle to contributing to the education pooled fund mechanism currently in
preparation. This was confirmed in September 2005. Whilst use of SWAp in Kenya is at
a relatively early stage, it appears to be progressing quickly, including the
introduction of the pooled fund. The specific nature of the pooled fund, including any
earmarking and specific mechanisms for disbursement and reporting is not clear (to
the author) however it is understood that the fund will ensure additional resources to
basic education. This will encompass areas consistent with UNICEF objectives and
include specific areas in which UNICEF is currently supporting the Government
through project approaches.

In **Rwanda**, the Government is currently preparing two types of pooled funding
mechanisms. Firstly, a potentially large pooled fund, essentially a form of sector
budget support, which will probably include a level of earmarking to basic education
priorities. Secondly, a smaller TA and Capacity Building pooled fund for technical
advisory support and capacity building activities at both central and decentralized
levels. The specific use of funds will be guided by the formulation of annual plans in
consultation with contributing Development Partners. Whilst it will not be specifically
earmarked to any sub-sector it is clear that a large proportion of the fund will support
activities related to basic education. UNICEF has entered into initial discussions with
Government on contributing to this pooled fund although a decision is yet to be
taken.

Firstly, UNICEF should revise it guidelines on the use of pooled funding, and also
communicate to external partners, to clarify its position. In particular, as the Kenya
case shows, UNICEF is able to contribute to pooled funding mechanisms.

Secondly, UNICEF should carefully consider the rationale for contributing to pooled
funding mechanisms. Perceptions from staff vary, from strong opposition to
considerable enthusiasm. Some feel that UNICEF will ‘loose control’, ‘will not be in
charge’ and that pooled funds are ‘unlikely to serve the interests of children’. On the
other hand, some staff see it as a considerable opportunity, particularly in getting
involved in a process that provides significant prospects for scaling up
implementation of key programmes consistent with UNICEF objectives.

So should UNICEF contribute, and if so why? It is suggested that UNICEF
contributing to pool funding can have the following main advantages:

- Improved alignment of UNICEF support to Government priorities
- Enhanced participation in policy development processes that have significant
  potential for scaling up resources and implementation to achieve key basic
  education outcomes (consistent with UNICEF’s mandate)

25 It is understood that UNICEF will contribute around $250,000 a year for four years (out of a
currently projected total of around $50 million for 2005/06, likely to increase in future years).
26 It worthy to note that UNFPA allow and have used pooled funding mechanisms for some time.
• Greater opportunities (and requirement) for UNICEF to develop understanding and capacities in sector-wide policy and strategy development (including education financing)

• Greater opportunities (and requirement) for UNICEF to develop understanding and capacities in sector performance monitoring including a move away from a focus on project outputs and attribution towards a focus on sector outcomes/results

• It will demonstrate an important commitment from UNICEF to respond to Government (and Development Partner) aid modality preferences consistent with SWAp (thus strengthening partnership)

• Reduced transaction costs for Government and releasing time and capacity for UNICEF staff to engage in higher level technical work

At the same time, UNICEF should carefully consider the implications of contributing to pooled funds. Firstly, most pooled funding mechanisms are now designed in such a way that they are essentially (sector) budget support (as opposed to using largely parallel systems). Secondly, contributing to pooled funds should not be perceived as ‘buying a ticket’ to the policy table to enable UNICEF to get its priorities or projects funded. Related to this, whilst it is understood that the level of UNICEF financial contribution is unlikely to be large, consideration should be given as to what is a meaningful amount, guided by discussion with Government and Development Partners. Whether justified or not, there may be perceptions that UNICEF is promoting particular interests on the back of relatively minor financial contributions. Where this is the case, contributing to pooled funding may be damaging and counter-productive. This can be avoided by UNICEF providing technical policy advice in its areas of comparative advantage whilst ensuring a well informed understanding of sector wide policy issues, priorities, capacities and resource availability (as discussed in section 5) – and, it follows, acknowledging and accepting why certain strategies may not be able to be implemented at a given time. Finally, it will be important that UNICEF understands and adheres to agreed Government systems for planning, monitoring, reporting and accountability (i.e. it does not demand particular activities, undertake separate monitoring or request specific financial attribution).

A clear message from Governments is that they would very much welcome UNICEF’s contribution to pooled funds. Some Development Partners and UNICEF staff questioned the rationale of UNICEF contributing to pooled funds given that the main source of UNICEF support is from donor agencies. This issue is an important consideration and in particular, there would be limited incentive and little point in donors channeling finance to pooled funding through Other Resources (which as discussed, constitute a large proportion of UNICEF funds).

The argument that UNICEF is not a donor carries limited weight, in the sense that the nature of UNICEF support on the ground27, including perceptions from Government, indicates that in practice the idea that UNICEF is not a donor is not particularly meaningful.

Overall, it is suggested that the potential advantages do justify ‘testing’ of pooling some funds from Regular Resource allocations. This should be undertaken selectively, and decisions should be taken on a case by case basis dependent on

27 The predominant focus of UNICEF operations (project support) is not significantly different from the operations of project donor agencies.
context, including the specific nature of the pooled fund. It is recognized that UNICEF are unlikely to channel large financial amounts through pooled funds and that project type support will remain the pre-dominant modality.\(^{28}\)

Finally, the analysis and recommendations in the Scanteam report as regards new aid modalities are worthy of note. The report argues against UN agency contributions to general budget support\(^{29}\) on the grounds that the UN is not a donor, that budget support conditionality would undermine the UN’s impartiality and that the UN should earn rather than buy its way into policy dialogue, through improved performance. Notwithstanding the recommendations and rationale for selective ‘testing’ of pooled funding outlined above, these arguments carry much weight, not least the point that the UN should earn its role in policy dialogue based on technical value added. Enhancing performance in policy development is paramount and should be the primary focus for improving UNICEF’s (and other UN agencies) engagement in SWAps and poverty reduction strategies. This is not inconsistent with contributing to pooled funds.

The Scanteam report suggests that the UN can and should play a prominent role in monitoring the implementation of budget support modalities and working to improve its effectiveness, including risk assessment and monitoring off-budget assistance. In some respects this is an attractive idea. In particular, the potential to establish an independent monitoring function. It would also necessitate that UN agencies ‘elevate’ their focus from what is largely project implementation operations towards greater attention to macro-level national development planning and monitoring – with the potential to add more value to MDG achievement. However, the challenges for UN agencies to effectively undertake such a function are considerable. At present, it is unlikely that there is significant demand from either Governments or Development Partners. In particular, it is doubtful whether the UN would be considered to have the sufficient technical capacity for such a role\(^{30}\), or arguably the legitimacy. Tangible progress under UN reforms in respect to greater harmonization, inter-agency cooperation, UNCT strategic focus, alignment with Government plans, and results orientation, would be an important step in positioning the UN for possible involvement in budget support monitoring.

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\(^{28}\) Strategically selective and well managed pilot projects remain a valid role for UNICEF and one through which they have the potential to add considerable value. In addition it will be important that UNICEF retain sufficient flexibility and capacity to respond to emergencies and related situations.

\(^{29}\) Forms of sector budget support (including pooled funding) are not discussed, although it is reasonably assumed that the authors would also recommend against UN financial contributions to such modalities.

\(^{30}\) Areas include macro-economic policy analysis, governance, and public expenditure planning and management.
9. Gender and Human Rights

The TOR for this study includes the following tasks:

- Analyze the SWAp process documents and their compliance with CRC and CEDAW.
- Review the extent of engagement in gender mainstreaming in current SWAp plans and process including partnerships for girls’ education (UNGEI).

As highlighted in the introduction it is not possible or appropriate to provide a comprehensive analysis or assessment of areas within specific country sector plans. This section therefore briefly focuses on broad issues emerging in respect to the extent to which sector development programmes address human rights and gender, and the role of UNICEF, highlighting some examples.

It is important to re-emphasise that a sector development plan developed through SWAp can address any area. However, as opposed to a specific sub-sector or programme area (e.g. pre-primary education) which might not be given priority within limited resources, it is widely recognised that gender and human rights are critical cross-cutting areas that must be addressed if key development and poverty reduction goals are to be achieved.

9.1 Gender Mainstreaming and Girls’ Education

SWAps are widely recognized as providing significant opportunities for mainstreaming and scaling up gender equity. Sector plans typically have a strong focus on gender equity objectives and outline strategies for increasing girls’ access and improving the quality of girls’ education. UNICEF has played a major role in this. An evaluation of the UNICEF Africa Girls Education Initiative (AGEI) suggested that it ‘did much to change the shape and policy discourse across sub-Saharan Africa in ways that helped move the issue of girls’ education from relative obscurity ten years ago to one of the top education priorities of many countries’\(^31\). The most significant outcome has been considerable gains in access including a reduction in the gender gap.

Whilst most countries have made progress towards gender parity, significant inequities remain. Most notably, a large proportion of countries are unlikely to meet the Millennium Development Goal of gender parity\(^32\). Girls’ drop out and repetition rates generally remain high and furthermore, limited progress has been made in enhancing gender equality (moving beyond equity to empowerment). Overall, it is widely considered that gender initiatives have not had significant systemic impact beyond increasing enrolments.

Notwithstanding this, there are good practices in gender mainstreaming and scaling up girls’ education. The Programme for the Advancement of Girls’ Education (PAGE) in Zambia, initiated and supported by UNICEF, is a particularly good example.


\(^{32}\) A World Bank study - *Girls’ Education in Africa: What Do We Know About Strategies That Work?* World Bank, Washington (2004) – highlights that of the 60% of low-income countries for which data is available, only 25% are likely to meet the MDG for gender parity.
**Mainstreaming and Scaling Up Girls’ Education in Zambia through PAGE**

PAGE was launched in 1994 as part of the UNICEF AGEI, initially funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Its primary aim is to transform the situation of girls’ and women’s education in Zambia.

Key objectives are, a) to create public awareness regarding girls’ education and empowerment amongst grassroots communities as well as amongst decision makers at national, provincial and district levels, b) strengthening MoE institutions at national, provincial, district and school levels to monitor and analyse data on girls’ education, and c) improving the efficiency and effectiveness of classroom practices in providing learners, especially girls, with basic competences.

Specific strategies include: policy development; planning at all levels; community mobilization; school management; research; public awareness; gender sensitive curriculum and materials development; teacher training; affirmative action in female appointments at all levels; school grants; girls’ bursary schemes; physical inputs including water and sanitation.

An important achievement of the programme is that key strategies became an intrinsic part of the MoE EFA strategy with particular focus on girls at primary level. The programme started as a pilot in two provinces and was gradually expanded to cover additional provinces. By 2002, PAGE strategies were being implemented in 2080 out of a total of 4556 basic schools in Zambia. At this point the decision was taken to scale up PAGE ‘best practices’ nationally. Throughout this process, significant resources and contributions additional to those from Government were mobilised and coordinated by MoE. This included support from a variety of partners, including NORAD, USAID, Irish Aid, the Netherlands Government, WFP and NGO’s (particularly FAWE), CBO’s and communities.

Probably the most important achievement has been that PAGE was been institutionalised within the Government system and key strategies integrated into the Basic Education Programme (a sub-sector plan) under the principles of SWAp. Whilst many challenges remain (outlined in the evaluation), PAGE has made a major contribution to progress in gender mainstreaming in education. This has established a strong basis for the achievement of key outcomes. PAGE has certainly contributed to high overall increases in access including a narrowing of the gender gap (although not as substantial as planned/expected). Qualitative evaluation and proxy indicators suggest quality improvement although this has yet to translate into a significant reduction in the gender gap in terms of achievement (testing/examinations).

**Key lessons**

- A holistic approach, and most importantly integrating and ‘transferring’ pilot initiatives into national policy and strategy is essential for effective scaling up
- Developing partnerships and mobilizing resources from a wide range of actors, under a coherent national strategy and Government ownership, can assist and accelerate scaling up
- Strong commitment is essential for mainstreaming and scaling up – it is reported that ‘champions’ from Government, Development Partners and NGO’s played a critical role in Zambia– ensuring that policy statements moved beyond rhetoric into action
- A multi-dimensional approach to gender mainstreaming and girls’ education is more likely to achieve results
- UNICEF were the key player in initiating a systematic approach to improving girls’ education – in addition to assisting with specific strategies, this involved working within the bigger picture, facilitating wider partnerships, building institutional capacities, and enabling a transition from a project approach to a more sustainable national programme

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33 This case is based on a forthcoming evaluation - Chung, F. *Programme for the Advancement of Girls’ Education (PAGE), Zambia.* (2005). The study provides analysis of strategies, results, lessons learned, remaining challenges and recommendations for the future.
In addition, through country visit interviews, there were many stated good examples of UNICEF and/or FAWE working with the Government and others on policy formulation processes. For example: gender budgeting and costing the EFA National Plan in Kenya; undertaking a Gender Audit in Lesotho which was used in formulating the sector plan; guidelines for schools on sexual maturation in Uganda; re-admission policy for pregnant girls/girl mothers in Malawi; and formulation of specific gender strategies in education in a number of countries.

A particularly successful targeted project initiative at the school/community level is the Girls Education Movement (GEM) clubs, which adopts an empowerment approach. The author visited a school in Uganda\textsuperscript{34} where the GEM club (girls and boys) escorted the author on a tour of the school and described the importance of water and sanitation, hygiene, nutrition, protection against sexual abuse, and the importance of girls’ education in general. Pupils described personal ambitions and how they can help community development. The results are highly impressive\textsuperscript{35}. The school has been supported as a Child Friendly School with the associated the package of assistance, and is used as a demonstration model school\textsuperscript{36}.

The key challenge is, can such initiatives be taken to scale and how? Can GEM clubs work outside of a UNICEF CFS project environment with the various associated inputs and support? A UNICEF staff consultant stated that the Government is happy for UNICEF to support GEM as it is doing things that we cannot do. However the dilemma is that the initiative is likely to remain small scale. As noted in section 6.3, the AGEI evaluation finds that there are few, if any, examples of scaling up such initiatives. If so, what are the implications for using the approach? A key question will be whether or not it can be spread through less intensive and expensive approaches? There is no intrinsic reason why an approach like GEM cannot be included in a Government sector plan, perhaps as a simplified pilot implemented largely through public awareness and mobilization activities. At present it appears to be largely limited to UNICEF supported schools.

It is widely agreed that both systemic and targeted interventions have an important role in gender strategies. It is important to emphasise, particularly within the context of sector-wide planning and resource prioritization (as discussed in sections 5 and 6), the importance of recognizing the value of gender-neutral interventions on girls’ education. Research has shown that such interventions are often of greater benefit to girls than boys (e.g. many strategies for increasing access). Furthermore such interventions are invariably critical, or even a pre-requisite, for realizing results through gender targeted interventions.

The United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI) is a partnership lead by UNICEF and including 13 UN agencies, donors, Governments, NGO’s, the private sector, communities and families. The primary purpose is to mount a sustained campaign to improve access and quality in girls’ education. Key aims are to influence decision-making and to mobilize resources for both targeted project initiatives and larger scale systemic interventions. UNGEI country taskforces are established and co-chaired by the ministry and UNICEF and/or other Development Partners including NGO’s. At regional level, a clear overall strategic vision has been developed. Most importantly in the context of this study, there is an emphasis on

\textsuperscript{34} Rubinda Boys Primary School, Mbarara District.
\textsuperscript{35} A recent UNICEF evaluation highlights many achievements of GEM in Uganda (Chung, F. \textit{Forthcoming Evaluation of UNICEF Gender/Girls’ Education Initiatives in Uganda}. (2005).)
\textsuperscript{36} GEM clubs have been replicated in other ESA countries.
locating and mainstreaming UNGEI within existing sectoral and multi-sectoral coordinating structures and frameworks (e.g. PRS, SWAps).

The initiative is still at a relatively early stage and it will take time to fully develop appropriate and effective country strategies. In some countries it was difficult to establish a cohesive picture of the strategic focus of UNGEI, how it was being implemented and what it had achieved. It is understood that the primary approach of UNGEI is to facilitate broad based partnerships, advocacy and mobilization and that it is not solely implemented through a set of tangible project activities. It is also understood that it will cut across all UNICEF gender initiatives in the sector and also encompasses some inter-sectoral areas. However, in some countries there appears to some fragmentation of approach and a lack of overall strategic vision and focus. A flexible approach is important however there is no reason why this should prevent articulation of a cohesive strategy. This is acknowledged as a general impression based on limited information.

As regards partnership, other than the usually prominent involvement of the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) (and schools and communities through project support) it was in some cases unclear how others, including key Development Partners are involved at the country level. Engagement of the wider development community on gender mainstreaming is often considered to be limited and disjointed. As the AGEI evaluation highlights, unlike many other development agencies, UNICEF has the comparative advantage of having gender in education experts on staff. In keeping with this, UNICEF, in its role as the lead Development Partner in girls’ education, has a major role in facilitating a more strategic, coordinated and systematic approach. This should be guided by approaches to policy development and scaling discussed in sections 5 and 6. Development Partners want to hear and read high quality evidence-based lessons in respect to gender mainstreaming.

It was observed by UNICEF staff that the capacity and performance of FAWE is mixed, ranging from strong to relatively ineffective. FAWE is the main NGO partner of UNICEF in most countries and implements much of the UNICEF support to gender initiatives. A general observation is that there is a tendency towards small scale implementation of targeted initiatives with insufficient focus on policy development for more systemic change. One FAWE office considered the main advantage of SWAp to be for UNICEF and Government to lobby donors to provide more funding for FAWE to implement its projects.

Central Government staff do see gender as a major comparative advantage of UNICEF and in general appreciate the technical advice and project support provided. Assistance in gender analysis and strategy formulation is particularly welcome. Notwithstanding this, in two countries, concerns were expressed that the ministry has clear gender mainstreaming strategies and plans but that continuing parallel UNICEF approaches create fragmentation and confusion. In particular, in one country the perception of a senior Government officer is that UNICEF has simultaneously prescribed a number of generic global/regional initiatives (UNGEI, AGEI, Accelerating Girls Education) that are not sufficiently adapted to context and that are

37 For example, strategies/action plans or other documentation from UNGEI taskforces might have provided greater clarity, but were not made available.
38 The involvement of office of the president in Rwanda including support from the First Lady is notable, particularly in public awareness campaigns.
not mainstreamed and institutionalized into Government planning and implementation processes. A good example of addressing this issue is in Tanzania where UNICEF, in response to local context, has adopted a ‘low profile’ approach to UNGEI in terms of branding whilst not diluting efforts on taking forward girls’ education through partnerships and established processes.

In terms of policy focus, consistent with discussion in section 5.2, it is worth emphasising the potential for UNICEF to get more involved in lower secondary level girls’ education. In some countries this was raised by Government and Development Partners, particularly the idea of developing and piloting poverty targeted bursary/scholarship programmes for girls.

Finally, it is worth highlighting some key findings from a World Bank working paper on strategies for girls’ education in Africa. Primarily, despite substantial knowledge and dissemination of the importance of girls’ education and the problems associated girls’ participation, it suggests that evidence on strategies for improvement is severely lacking. This is to some extent due to the diversity of factors affecting girls’ education – ‘macro-development factors, national policy and legislation issues, institutional, social and cultural concerns and local community/household factors’ – and the fact that these are often not sufficiently taken into account. It is observed that much analysis and dissemination is geared towards advocacy which tends towards simplification and re-iteration of accepted findings. It is not suggested that advocacy is unimportant but that more specific and rigorous lesson learning and evaluation is needed to inform strategy development (but that the balance seems to be with the former). If analysis, evaluation and strategy development in the area of gender/girls’ education has been less effective (partly because it might be more ‘difficult’) as this study suggests, then much greater attention is due. It is suggested that UNICEF has an important role in this and discussion on policy and piloting in sections 5 and 6, outline some general approaches.

9.2 Human Rights

UNICEF’s mandate is fundamentally driven by a human rights agenda. In particular, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) form the keystone of the organization’s mandate and mission. All programmes are focused on the realisation of rights outlined in these conventions and specific approaches and tools have been developed to facilitate this, in particular the UNICEF human rights based programming approach.

How and to what extent do education sector plans address these rights? Firstly, it is suggested that in general, broad aims and strategies contained in sector plans have a very strong rights orientation. Secondly, it is suggested that very significant progress has been made in realizing rights in recent years through education sector-wide development using SWAp. Thirdly, it is suggested that the adoption of SWAp and associated mechanisms has been and will be much more effective in realizing rights than traditional project approaches.

For example, sector plan objectives invariably give high priority to improving access and equity (both gender equity and for disadvantaged groups). The introduction of free primary/basic education over the last 10-15 years has resulted in enormous

progress in terms of the universal right to education (including for girls). The adoption of SWAp has facilitated significant expansion of national and systemic provision of basic education services. These are major gains without which it would be difficult to envisage the realisation of a more multi-dimensional rights agenda.

This is not to suggest that the rights of the child and women are adequately addressed in sector plans and implementation – there will clearly be many areas where this is not the case. However, as discussed at length in section 6, policy and strategy choices must be made, and all policies will have an implication for the realisation of rights. Whilst it should not be considered as choosing whose right or what right, it would be naïve to dismiss the fact that in reality, implementing certain strategies will contribute towards the realisation of certain rights and for certain people, and not other rights for other people. Within this context it is highly appropriate, in fact critical, that UNICEF increases its focus on policy advocacy. Where might efforts be best directed?

Examples of UNICEF good practice throughout the study have all contributed to the realization of human rights: scaling up water and sanitation in schools; provision of essential health care; scaling up complementary/non-formal education; poverty analysis with a child focus, etc. These particular examples seem to be particularly strategic in that they have influenced policy. The Child Friendly School approach addresses a number of rights very effectively. However, the extent to which it might make a difference beyond the schools and communities in which it operates is highly questionable.

It is suggested that there are some critical areas where UNICEF can best use its comparative advantage to make a difference. Firstly, legislative reform in key areas which often fall outside of sector development processes. A good example is supporting work on a Sexual Offences Act, and a Child Protection and Welfare Act in Lesotho. Secondly, supporting analysis and development of poverty reduction strategies including budgetary and inter-sectoral issues. Thirdly, supporting Government in developing national campaigns and public awareness activities – an area in which UNICEF is very experienced. These are not new ideas - UNICEF is working in all of these areas. The point is to suggest that such approaches are more likely to achieve significant results in realizing rights than the pre-dominant project approach.

Finally, from discussions with partners (particularly Development Partners but also some Government staff), it is apparent that a significant level of irritation exists related to the perceptions of some UNICEF staff that other partners are not interested in human rights or gender issues and do not address them in their operations and support. Whilst this is clearly not the view of the organization it does create negative perceptions.

Human resource, capacity and organisational issues cut across all of the areas of this study and are touched upon in each section. This section outlines key issues and recommendations, drawing on this preceding analysis and providing additional analysis.

The TOR includes the specific following tasks:

- Assess difficulties encountered by education staff that have to be both project managers and high level advisors in SWAp processes.
- Assist UNICEF to internally understand and plan in terms of HR and time utilization the appropriate balance between project management and engagement in external processes and networks, especially regarding UNGEI leadership.
- Based on the document review, analysis and case studies from countries in the region, do a capacity gap analysis for UNICEF in the SWAp process and describe interventions for capacity development in UNICEF (at country and regional levels).

UNICEF internal strategy increasingly demands that its staff effectively engage in external processes, most importantly at the ‘policy level’. Making a difference within SWAp environments necessarily requires such engagement and it is appropriate and welcome that UNICEF will take action to facilitate this. The fundamental constraint is that UNICEF approaches, including the focus and scope of its support, its programme policy and procedures and its human resource development practices, militate against effective engagement.

There are three main and mutually reinforcing factors that contribute to this problem. Firstly, as the TOR suggest, competing priorities are resulting in ineffective engagement in one role or the other (or both). Overwhelming evidence shows that advisory work suffers because staff spend a disproportionately large amount of time on project management. Secondly, the profile of staff, including experience and skills, is not sufficiently matched to the requirements for effective ‘policy engagement’ within SWAp. Thirdly, staff are not provided with sufficient opportunity to develop their experience and capacity for policy engagement. A key challenge will be to provide appropriate institutional incentives for the organization and its staff to realign and refocus its operations in this area.

The organisation increasingly recognizes these issues, as became apparent in discussions with staff - from Representative to Assistant Project Officer level at country level, and by sector and programme advisory level staff at the regional office. In addition, a significant number of partners (including Government and Development Partners) identified these factors as a constraint.

UNICEF HQ undertook a survey – ‘Skills Assessment and Learning Needs: A World-Wide Analysis of UNICEF Human Resources in Education’ – issued in December 2000 (which will be referred to as the ‘HR study’). Whilst the survey was not specifically focused on implications in respect to SWAp, it does provide some useful data and analysis that can assist in considering HR issues. A summary of relevant data from the survey is provided in Annex 2.
Whilst the survey is not current, it is still considered to be largely valid. In particular, a) changes in the education ‘pool’ of staff since 2000 will not have been significant enough to render the general findings invalid and b) there has not been any significant and systematic measures taken (e.g. major recruitment policy measures) that are likely to have resulted in a significantly different picture. Notwithstanding this, it is recommended that the survey is repeated in early 2006. The survey should focus on similar areas and use similar methods but should also include Representatives and Senior Programme Officer’s (SPO’s), and provide disaggregated analysis by region. The survey should be used to inform the development of specific action plans for addressing HR issues outlined below.

Key recommendations of the study include, a) strengthening HR capacity particularly at the regional office level, b) selective recruitment focusing on areas that cannot be quickly developed in existing staff (policy development, sector analysis, ECD, gender analysis) and c) capacity development in key areas (policy development, strategic planning, education finance, sector analysis, HIV/AIDS, quality in education, education in emergencies, and gender mainstreaming).

10.1 Project Manager and/or Advisor?

A basic survey was undertaken as part of the study by asking UNICEF staff how they spent their time. The results are presented in the table below.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Function/task</th>
<th>Time spent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy/strategy/high level external processes</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical support to projects (includes field visits)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration (includes financial management and procurement)</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal planning (includes project and country planning and review)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be noted that the project management function includes both technical support to projects and administration, i.e. totaling 70%, but notably, administration accounts for a much larger proportion of project management time.

The method of information gathering and analysis was very basic and broad and should be recognized as such. The time spent is an average (i.e. some staff spend 50% of their time on policy). Time spent could be analysed by different job titles/grades. Categories could be further defined and there might be some crossover between categories (e.g. some of what is included in internal planning might be considered as contributing to external policy processes). Analysis could be of course be disaggregated by country. It would be relatively easy for UNICEF to undertake more sophisticated surveys to achieve a more detailed and accurate picture (probably through questionnaire survey methods with guidelines/orientation). However, as a general snapshot, the results will probably largely ring true and not surprise too many staff.

Some of the individual responses supplemented by further discussion highlight some useful findings which may be useful in identifying specific areas for where action might be taken:

41 If HQ is unable to facilitate this in early 2006 then ESARO should undertake its own survey.
42 Including education sector staff, Senior Programme Officers (where available), other sector staff, and cross-sectoral staff (e.g. social policy, monitoring).
The amount of time spent on administration by education section heads who are expected to take a lead on ‘policy engagement’ was consistently high (as much as 70%) due to a requirement to oversee budgets, financial reporting and accountability – this has a negative impact on time spent on policy engagement.

Staff in countries with larger programmes spend more time on administration suggesting that staffing levels relative to size of programme may be uneven (this does not necessarily suggest it should be uniform).

A few staff are able to devote much more time than the average on ‘policy engagement’ (as high as 70%). Firstly, this was more common in ‘non-education’ sections. Secondly, it is higher in offices where significant aspects of financial management are delegated to particular staff and/or sections, and where a particular member of staff is dedicated to policy related work. For example in Uganda, the primary responsibility for implementation issues including administration lies with regional/district sections. This has freed up time for Technical Clusters (e.g. education) to spend more time on policy engagement, technical planning and monitoring support to projects. In Malawi, staff noted that the establishment of a CAG Committee has reduced the burden of financial administration on sector staff.

Many staff highlighted, not surprisingly, that substantially increasing time demands for internal planning coincided with the programme cycle (during periods of Country Planning, Mid-Term Review and to a lesser extent UNDAF preparation). One education staff member estimated this at 90%.

It was universally stated that education staff were unable to spend sufficient time in the field and that they were not meeting agreed time commitments to field support specified in job descriptions/plans.

The reality is that where priorities compete, ‘policy engagement’ will invariably be the first task to be crossed off the ‘to do’ list. Rather than spend a day reading, analysing and discussing with colleagues, for example, the new strategy for expanding secondary education access and improving quality in preparation for participating in a one day consultative meeting later in the week, staff will be more likely to spend time following up on CAG’s with the ministry, following up on the supply of materials and stationery to schools and updating/maintaining PROMS, all in preparation for a management meeting later in the week - where staff will have to report on and be accountable for progress in liquidating CAG and processing the next fund disbursements.

It should be acknowledged that this is rational behaviour. There is an overriding imperative to spend, implement and to maintain internal systems. Individual performance is much more likely to be recognised and rewarded for this than it is for engagement in external processes which are less easily and immediately measurable in terms of contributing to the achievement of UNICEF Country Programme objectives.

The optimum balance of time between the two roles will clearly have to be determined according to specific context. However, some principles and suggestions can be proposed.

At the country level, at least one member of staff (per sector) should be fully dedicated to policy oriented advisory work. It is accepted that some time will have to
be devoted to internal processes however project management including financial management and administration should be the responsibility of other staff.

It is suggested that an advisory group should be established (across sectors) separate from sector project implementation teams. This should include the SPO, cross-sectoral staff (e.g. social policy, monitoring) and the sector staff dedicated to policy work. It is acknowledged that linkages between the advisory and implementation teams will be necessary (e.g. for lesson learning and scaling up) however project management and administration should not impinge on advisory work. Such an advisory team, in addition to freeing up time for sector policy work, will facilitate improved inter-sectoral linkages, and also strengthen coordination and support from the SPO and cross-sectoral advisors.

Project managers should also undertake some policy oriented work in support of advisors (also enabling cover for absences). With possible reduction in project management and some simplification in procedures this restructuring should be operationally possible. As a general principle, changes should not necessitate an increase in the number of staff at country level. Increasing staff numbers is not a strategic or sustainable solution to the problem.

Alongside the re-orientation of roles, it is recommended that UNICEF change its job titles. Staff responsible for taking a lead in a sector including on high level external engagement (e.g. education section heads who usually also have the title of Project Officer) should be re-titled Education Advisor. In countries where other staff may also take a prominent role in this area, it might be appropriate to call these staff Assistant Education Advisers. It might also be appropriate to rename Education Project Officers as Education Programme Officers alongside a move towards greater balance between project management and policy orientated work. Such measures might seem superficial (and they will be if staff are not enabled to adopt such roles) but they can be very important. A UNICEF education section head has pointed out the contradictions of handing over a ‘project officer’ business card as the co-chair of ministry-development partner policy consultation group. Such changes will also provide greater recognition to staff who are increasingly undertaking advisory work. Changing job titles will (presumably) be straightforward.

The roles of country Representatives and SPO’s are clearly critical in respect to engagement in SWAps. Whilst information gathered was not sufficiently comprehensive (due to availability of staff and the number of interviews) it is possible to highlight some broad issues.

Firstly, whilst Representatives (in particular) and SPO’s are not responsible for project implementation they are necessarily required to provide management oversight (including financial management). Given the scope and focus of projects and intensive nature of management systems this does limit their engagement in ‘upstream’ work. As with other staff, a tighter focus and more simplified systems will free up time. Secondly, a very considerable amount of time is devoted to profile-raising. Whilst the ‘representative’ function will always be important, the extent of profile-raising (related to attribution and branding) is questionable within SWAp environments (discussed in section 11) and some of this time and capacity might be better directed to policy related work. Thirdly, perhaps as a result of the above, there was a feeling amongst some staff that Representatives and SPO’s need to provide greater leadership, direction and support to policy work within a SWAp environment. This includes participation in Government and Development Partner policy fora at an appropriate level. At the same time, it is acknowledged from country visits that some
Representatives and SPO’s are, or are beginning to, engage more strategically in these areas.

At the regional level, dedicated advisory staff exist, however it is widely acknowledged that there is insufficient capacity, in terms of both staff numbers and technical focus, to provide effective policy oriented support to country offices. The need for increased regional support to country offices was highlighted by a number of country staff. Existing regional staff are overstretched. It is recommended that additional staff are recruited in areas outlined below.

**10.2 Staff Profiles and Recruitment**

A significant number of staff highlighted an increasing need for a wider range of staff experience, skills and expertise in areas relevant to working with a SWAp environment. This view was particularly common amongst more senior and managerial level staff but also amongst some Project Officers. As the HR survey shows, the majority of staff are qualified and experienced in traditional areas of education. Whilst this will remain necessary, additional areas are required. In particular:

- Sector-wide education policy and planning (and SWAp generally)
- Financial and budget analysis and planning (national and sector level)
- Institutional development, governance and public sector management
- Gender mainstreaming in a national planning and institutional development context

Specialist expertise is most needed at the Project Officer/Advisory level, however it is also important that Representatives and SPO's have sufficient grounding in such areas. Whilst, the HR study did not include these staff, it is assumed that qualifications and experience are also in largely 'traditional' areas. Leadership, management and communication skills will remain paramount, however this should be combined with an understanding of, and ability to engage in, technical areas relevant to SWAp.

At the country level, it will be necessary to strengthen these areas through a combination of capacity building (see below) and recruitment of appropriately skilled people into posts as they become vacant. At the regional level it is recommended that new recruitment is undertaken in the priority areas outlined above. It might be possible to combine some of the areas. As a minimum it is recommended that at least one additional and dedicated advisory post is created to cover the above areas (with the priority being the first two areas). The post(s) should not cut across different sectors.

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43 It is emphasized that greater skills and experience in these areas are needed in addition to (and to complement) existing skills/experience. The study is not suggesting (as feedback from some UNICEF staff has indicated) that UNICEF staff should be, for example, economists or public sector reform experts.

44 There is considerable existing capacity in gender which could probably be enhanced to achieve greater policy focus.
As regards recruitment processes, it is generally considered good practice not to recruit Government officers into development agencies on the grounds that it will drain valuable capacity. In some countries (including in EAS) it is a specific principle reinforced in Development Partner - Government agreements (e.g. Codes of Conduct). From the HR study there is clearly a relatively large number of ex-Government staff working for UNICEF. Many were probably appointed before this was widely acknowledged good practice. Also, it is recognized that there may be circumstances (e.g. where a Government officer has reached retirement age) where this is acceptable. However, such appointments do still occur. UNICEF should endeavour to adhere to the principle. This is not saying that national staff should not be appointed. National staff are particularly valuable due to the context specific experience and knowledge that they bring, and UNICEF is particularly successful in this respect.

Finally, it important that UNICEF utilises existing staff capacity more effectively by posting staff with a proven track record of performance in a particular area into posts requiring skills in that area. UNICEF does have staff who have worked very effectively within SWAps. The converse is also true and staff should not be automatically posted into a ‘SWAp’ country solely on the grounds that they have worked in another SWAp country.

10.3 Capacity Building

The most commonly expressed priority learning need expressed in the HR study was in the area of education policy development, including strategic planning, sector analysis and review, education finance and EMIS. 76% of staff indicated this priority. It was also identified as a critical priority by all staff interviewed (with the exception of one person who expressed the view that the knowledge and skills element of capacity in this area is not a problem but that organizational issues hold us back).

Notwithstanding the above, it should be recognized that training and learning initiatives (formal or less formal) cannot alone facilitate more effective engagement. It is not possible to simply ‘learn’ policy by attending a training course. Whilst orientation on SWAp and associated issues is important, equally important is ‘getting your hands dirty’ and learning by doing.

The reality is that most people who are considered to have a developed understanding and skills in SWAp related areas did so largely by doing it, whether by desire or by organisational necessity. The majority of development agency and consultant advisors have come from traditional project management backgrounds. Whilst most mid to senior level Government staff had greater experience in education systems policy and planning, it was generally not well oriented to sector-wide issues and of course aspects relating to the use of external assistance were largely project related. Whilst the numbers of ‘SWAp’ experienced people is increasing most people were launched straight into a SWAp with limited relevant experience.

With this in mind it is suggested that the focus should be on learning by doing supplemented by orientation on key issues through workshops and seminars. ESARO is currently developing an Education SWAp Resource Pack to be finalised by the end of 2005. It will aim to address the key issues and needs outlined in this study through workshops and some self-access materials. It will be available for use in early 2006. In addition, ESARO intends to prepare a capacity building plan by early 2006.
It will be important that capacity development initiatives are not restricted to technical level staff, i.e. Representatives and SPO’s should also participate.

A further recommendation is that country offices should establish a document resource collection focused on materials relevant to SWAp and new thinking on development and aid. During country visits it became apparent that there is a lack of awareness of the existence of key documents in these areas\(^\text{45}\) (and in most cases it appears the office had very few of these types of documents and/or they were not easily accessible). Document collections should include country specific, wider and more generic materials. A CD with useful materials will be produced as part of the SWAp Resource Pack.

Finally it is worth highlighting (as accurately as can be remembered) something said by a UNICEF staff member.

‘SWAp is not rocket science, but we cannot effectively engage if we do not take action on enhancing technical skills and capacity, and changing organizational culture, systems and incentives’. And she added that ‘taking action on one without action on the other will not make a significant difference’.

Capacity development should be seen as multi-dimensional, and critically including an awareness of organizational issues.

\(^{45}\) The Mozambique office appeared to be an exception to this and in general there appeared to be greater awareness and understanding of issues.
11. Small Points…?

This final section makes some observations about UNICEF that might seem fairly insignificant but that are actually important, particular within a SWAp environment.

Firstly, there is a widespread tendency for UNICEF to ‘brand’ its support. The primary school that the author visited in one of the countries, with UNICEF written in four foot high letters on the wall is not a UNICEF school. The, for example, Strategy for Disadvantaged Children that was produced with assistance from a UNICEF funded consultant is not a UNICEF strategy so why does it have a UNICEF logo on the front? (The strategy is a Government strategy and the adviser was working for the Government, not UNICEF). Attribution and visibility is increasingly recognized as inappropriate within approaches which aim to promote ownership and partnership, and contribute to a common purpose. This was strongly commented on by some partners.

If there is some imperative for visibility or attribution arising from funding sources then UNICEF should endeavour to educate the sponsor and develop ways for toning down and more selective use of the brand. If it considered necessary for international fund raising then it should be used selectively for that purpose. It should also be recognized that profile raising activities can take up considerable time and effort that might be better employed on other priorities.

Secondly, in some ways related to the above, a tendency to use UNICEF language or concepts associated with certain approaches can have a number of shortcomings. Take, for example, Child Friendly School. There is often the perception that the approach is a UNICEF approach or project, again with implications for ownership. It can often be perceived as a generic approach imposed from elsewhere and with limited flexibility for adaptation. Finally, the language may be considered inappropriate to some – the author has worked with Government staff in one country where they considered it to imply that Government provision was fundamentally unfriendly to children. UNICEF should to be more aware of perceptions and de-jargonise where necessary.

Thirdly, there is much use of general value driven and sometimes emotive language and terms to describe UNICEF (and the UN more generally). UNICEF is an ‘honest broker’, a ‘trusted partner’, ‘impartial’, ‘we just care about helping children’, etc. There is little practical value in attempting to assess such statements other than to observe that a) amongst staff it sometimes seems to serve the primary purpose of self-assurance that ‘our approach must be right’, ‘we’re better’, ‘more genuine’ and we have greater legitimacy than others, b) it implicitly implies that other partners (particularly Development Partners) are not the above, and c) such views are not necessarily shared by other partners. Such thinking tends to rely more on historical notions of the UN/UNICEF than on actual performance in achieving results. The Scanteam report makes a similar observation, suggesting that ‘some humility is required’.

Finally, perceptions are real in the sense that they exist (whether or not they are considered valid). Some of the perceptions of UNICEF highlighted in this study, expressed by multiple partners, need to be more openly acknowledged and discussed with partners. Not everything can be easily resolved but greater mutual

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46 The author is not aware of the origins of the Child Friendly School approach but it is certainly thought of as a UNICEF approach.
47 A term used by a UNICEF staff member.
understanding can be reached and many issues can be addressed. Some Development Partners acknowledged that they have devoted insufficient effort in listening to and understanding UNICEF and this may contribute to negative perceptions. However, the onus to address such issues should lie with UNICEF. If this is not taken seriously then some of the negative perceptions of UNICEF will remain and may worsen. In addition to taking specific action (including in some of the areas which might be accepted in this study), a useful concrete action would be to produce a paper outlining UNICEF’s position on new development and aid approaches (including SWAp).
12. Summary of Key Recommendations

The following is a summary of key recommendations for action including the main section(s) where they can be found in the report.

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<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Section</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Global Policy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Insufficient external understanding of UNICEF position and approaches to SWAp and ‘the new aid environment’. There is a risk of negative perceptions, misunderstanding and loss of credibility.</td>
<td>Produce a comprehensive paper for external consumption summarizing UNICEF’s position, including key commitments related to ways in which UNICEF will work within SWAps and the new aid environment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient internal understanding, in particular at country level, of UNICEF position on SWAps in terms of what UNICEF should/should not and can/cannot do.</td>
<td>Systematic engagement in high level discussions with Governments and Development Partners, including through UNDG where appropriate.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Country Policy and Programme</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In some countries, supporting too many policy areas is compromising the achievement of key results. Working in too many areas can distort Government policy and restrict staff capacity to engage effectively.</td>
<td>Where necessary, reduce scope of policy development support</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much project implementation is a burden on Government and is severely restricting staff capacity to effectively engage in policy development and advocacy. This militates against achieving key results and there is a risk of negative external perceptions and loss of credibility.</td>
<td>Reduce project implementation by reducing the scope of projects. Including through more selective piloting in terms of focus and coverage, and developing exit strategies.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programming and Procedures</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensive and time consuming programming planning and review procedures are a burden on Government, limit meaningful participation, and restrict staff capacity to engage in other work, in particular policy development and advocacy.</td>
<td>Further simplification of programming based on the principle of using Government documents and processes as far as possible. Move forward with existing UNDG harmonization and alignment plans in these areas, e.g. UNDAF harmonization.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel, intensive and time consuming project and financial management procedures are a</td>
<td>Introduce framework for cash transfers as soon as possible in 2006 in all countries (subject to agreement on timing with</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
burden on Government, compromise Government accountability, and are severely restricting staff capacity to effectively engage in policy development and advocacy.

Government and other UNDG agencies).

Ongoing review of procedures and consideration of selective use of pooled funding mechanisms.

Reduce scope of project implementation (see above).

### Human Resources

| Insufficient skills and expertise in high quality evidence based evaluation, lesson learning and documentation, is restricting effective policy advocacy and scaling up. | Combination of capacity building of staff through training/workshops etc, sharing good practice and production of resources/guidance. | 10 |
| Insufficient capacity, skills, knowledge and experience at regional level* in key areas relevant to SWAp (outlined in section 10.2) is restricting effective engagement. | Combination of recruitment of appropriately skilled new regional* staff and capacity building to meet key capacity gaps. | 10 |
| Insufficient capacity, skills, knowledge and experience at country level in key areas relevant to SWAp (outlined in section 10.2) is restricting effective engagement. | Combination of recruitment of appropriately skilled staff into posts as they become vacant, capacity building to meet key gaps, and greater support from regional advisors. | 10 |
| | Establishment and maintenance of document collections on SWAp and related issues at regional and country office levels. | 10 |
| | Undertake a HR survey (similar to that carried out in 2000) to inform HR issues. | 10 |
| | (The development of an Education SWAp Resource Pack for use in 2006 is a key capacity building measure) | 10 |

* Possibly also at HQ.

*Possibly also at HQ.
## Annexes

### Annex 1: People Consulted

The numbers of people consulted by country and category are provided in the table below. In total 216 people were consulted. Most consultations were through individual or small meetings comprising 2/3 people, although some were through larger group meetings.

Seven staff members of UNICEF ESARO were consulted, of which six hold senior or relatively senior positions.

A meeting and debriefing was undertaken with the UNICEF Representative in four of the seven countries (the Representatives in Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda were unavailable at the time of the country visit). Other meetings were with section heads, project officers (in education, other sectors and cross-cutting sections) and Senior Programme Officers.

Government staff at different levels were consulted, in all countries ranging from Director level to officers with specific responsibilities for implementing UNICEF supported programmes, and also two Permanent Secretary level positions.

With very few exceptions, Development Partner and NGO staff consulted were at senior level with advisory responsibilities.

A full list of names, positions and organizations can be made available if required.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>UNICEF staff</th>
<th>Development Partner staff</th>
<th>NGO staff</th>
<th>Central Government staff</th>
<th>Regional Government staff</th>
<th>Other UN agency staff</th>
<th>Non-Formal Education Centre staff</th>
<th>Primary School Head/Deputy Head Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesotho</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 NGO staff
6 Central Government staff
2 District Government staff
3 Primary School Head/Deputy Head Teachers
7 Primary School Teachers
14 representatives of a School Committee, Parent Teachers Association and Mother Group

**Mozambique**

10 UNICEF staff
1 other UN agency staff
12 Development Partner staff
1 NGO staff
5 Central Government staff (1 TA)
1 District Government staff

**Rwanda**

6 UNICEF staff
2 other UN agency staff
4 Development Partner staff
3 NGO staff
6 Central Government staff (1 TA)
1 District Government staff
1 Primary School Head Teacher

**Uganda**

10 UNICEF staff
9 Development partner staff
1 NGO staff
3 Central Government staff
4 District Government staff
1 Elected member of Local Government
2 Primary School Head Teachers
1 Primary School Teacher and GEM Patron
12 Primary School pupils and GEM club members
Annex 2: Summary of UNICEF HQ Human Resources in Education Survey

The study, undertaken in 2000, used a simple survey instrument. 89% of education staff responded to the survey. It is worth noting that the largest proportion of education staff by region is in ESARO (30%) and that a majority of the remaining staff are working in regions (Western and Central Africa, and parts of Asia) where SWAp is most prevalent. The following is a summary of relevant data and analysis taken from the survey:

‘Skills Assessment and Learning Needs: A World-Wide Analysis of UNICEF Human Resources in Education’ (selected data)

General
- education staff are specialized largely in traditional areas of education
- there is a relatively high proportion in the age group 51-55 (37%) who will retire before the end of the decade
- there is very limited capacity in terms of education posts at regional offices

Qualifications
- education staff have a relatively high level of academic qualification (78% hold advanced degrees)
- the majority (90%) of these qualifications are in education or education related fields
- a high proportion of education staff have specialised qualifications in teaching related subjects
- the third highest cited area was ‘Education policy and planning’ (32%)
- 13% of staff reported specialized qualifications in Economics and Financing of Education
- 25% of staff reported a mix of other disciplines, most frequently Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology
- a significant proportion of international staff hold specialised qualifications in International/Comparative Education

Experience prior to joining UNICEF
- 47% of staff have previously been employed in Ministries of Education (including as teachers)
- 24% in other Government positions
- 36% in universities
- 28% in NGOs/Foundations
- 14% in UN agencies
- 8% in UNESCO
- 15% in other development agencies
- 30% in other relevant sectors within UNICEF
- 24% in the private sector and 39% ‘other’
- 70% of international staff have worked in two or more developing countries

**Professional Education Competence**

- Around one third of staff claim Policy Development and Dialogue, Educational Administration and Management and Education Sector Review as areas of professional competence
- Around 45% claim Girls Education/Gender
- Over 40% claim Teacher Training
- Over one third claim Early Childhood Care
- Around 15% claim HIV/AIDS and Education in Emergencies

**Learning Needs**

- 76% of staff identified Education Policy Development, Strategic Planning, Sector Analysis and Review, Education Finance and EMIS as a priority learning needs
- The next most common need was Quality in Education (33%)
- Of a total of 10 expressed learning needs, Monitoring and Evaluation/Research was ranked 6th
Annex 3: Country Observations

The following observations include some broad suggestions for areas that UNICEF might consider based on discussions during the country visits. They do not include specific suggestions related to current projects. Consideration of any future adjustments to current programmes will take into account specific circumstances. It is suggested that this should be guided by findings and recommendations on how UNICEF can add greater value to SWAps outlined in this study.
Ethiopia

Context

Ethiopia adopted a SWAp around 1996/97 and launched its first sector-wide plan in 1997. Progress appears to be mixed but generally positive, particularly in the context of significant challenges presented by the size and demographics of the country. This includes challenges related to effective decentralization in a country with many remote areas. Government is considered to have strong ownership of development assistance.

The Government has established and articulated strong preferences for the use of aid modalities as, i) direct budget support, ii) pooled funding mechanisms and iii) project support. There is a significant level of general budget support and also specific education pooled funding mechanisms earmarked to the Teacher Development Programme and TA and capacity building (the Education Process Fund). Given regional autonomy in development planning and implementation under the decentralized system, there is consideration of developing decentralised budget support mechanisms for improved service delivery.

The Government has established a system of ‘off-setting’ external assistance by reducing domestic resource allocation by an equivalent amount. This aims to ensure all external assistance in captured in the Government budget and also to promote regional equity in resource allocation. It should also help to ensure that external project assistance is well aligned with priorities, and is accountable and justified in terms of value. However, it is reported that a significant amount of assistance is not being declared to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, including a large proportion of UNICEF assistance to the regional/district level.

UNICEF’s support to education is the second largest in ESARO. UNICEF supports all regions in the country although only a small proportion of worodas and school/institutions/communities within worodas. Operations appear to be highly skewed to project implementation work.

Suggestions for UNICEF

UNICEF’s current Country Programme runs from 2001-2006 presenting an early opportunity to consider the future strategies for support.

The Ministry of Education appears to want UNICEF to continue supporting all regions however it is suggested that this is spreading the programme and staff capacity very thinly with the risk of weak focus and limited impact. With this in mind, it is suggested that the scope and coverage of the programme is reviewed with MoE. It was suggested that UNICEF support to the cluster system is not well coordinated and aligned with MoE teacher development strategies supported through the pooled fund. UNICEF should work with MoE and the Teacher Education Agencies Group to review this. If the cluster system is not to be scaled up, or coordinated with mainstream strategy, then UNICEF should consider phasing out support. It is suggested that continuing technical support to policy development in establishing water and sanitation in schools should be a priority. It is suggested that UNICEF should consider contribution to the Education Process Fund for TA and capacity building. UNICEF should provide information to MoFPED according to Government guidelines and widely agreed good practice.

48 Coordinated through MoE consultation with the Teacher Education Agencies Group.
Kenya

Context

Kenya adopted an education SWAp in 2004. Whilst it is in the early stages of development it appears to be progressing quickly. In particular, the development of the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) in early/mid 2005 provides a comprehensive framework for expanding and improving education services consistent with high priority in the national planning and budget allocation.

Whilst budget support is not yet provided\(^\text{49}\), a potentially substantial sector budget support pooled funding mechanism (the Joint Financing Arrangement – JFA) is currently being finalised. The JFA will incorporate earmarking to basic education priorities and whilst specific programmes are not yet clear (to the author) it is clear that the proportion to basic education will be high. In addition, consistent with KESSP, the pooled fund will ensure expansion of programmes and resources to education in Arid and Semi Arid Lands and urban slum areas. In November 2005, $24m was committed to the JFA through the EFA Fast Track Initiative. The focus of the JFA is clearly consistent with UNICEF objectives.

UNICEF has agreed to contribute to the JFA (through Regular Resources) and this will be the first case of UNICEF participation in a pooled funding mechanism\(^\text{50}\). UNICEF provides significant support to the school cluster system. It is apparent that there is a lack of consensus between UNICEF, other Development Partners and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) on future strategy related to teacher development and management\(^\text{51}\). MoEST is currently undertaking an evaluation of options in this area.

Suggestions for UNICEF


It is suggested that the decision to participate in the JFA is positive. It will improve alignment of support, facilitate enhanced engagement in policy dialogue and will signal a strong commitment to partnership and aid effectiveness. As a partner within the JFA mechanism it is important that UNICEF does not merely see this as an opportunity to promote UNICEF agendas or projects, and that it adheres to the agreed Government systems for planning, monitoring, reporting and accountability (i.e. it does not demand particular activities, undertake separate monitoring or request specific financial attribution). It will also be important that UNICEF project support is strongly aligned with KESSP and programmes implemented through JFA funding. In particular, it will be important to consider the implications for support to the cluster system. This will depend upon whether it is decided that clusters should be scaled up, or maintained as a complementary approach, or combined in some way with other approaches, or not adopted as a strategy. In the event of the latter MoEST decision it will be appropriate for UNICEF to phase out support to the cluster system.

\(^{49}\) A number of donors are considering budget support in the future, dependent on assessment of progress including public financial management systems.

\(^{50}\) Or at least the first case of contributing to a pooled fund fully managed and accounted for under Government systems and procedures.

\(^{51}\) Other donors have been supporting other approaches including the DFID supported School Based Teacher Development programme and CIDA support.
Lesotho

Context

Lesotho adopted an education SWAp in 2003/04 and it is in a relatively early stage of development. UNICEF was instrumental in encouraging the move towards SWAp. In particular UNICEF funded the participation of senior Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) officers in the UNICEF Regional SWAp Workshop in 2003, which was a very important step in Lesotho initiating SWAp. Budget support or pooled funding modalities are not used in Lesotho however there is increasing Government awareness, and a desire to move towards some use of non-project modalities in the future. Development Partner support is strongly focused on interventions to address the HIV/AIDS crisis. This includes UNICEF (and other UN agency) support, for example through its support to lifeskills curriculum development and implementation.

The operating context in Lesotho is in some ways significantly different from other countries. In particular, the fact that Lesotho is a relatively small country and there are few Development Partners providing assistance (three agencies provide significant support to education\textsuperscript{52}). There are a number of implications of this. Firstly, UNICEF project support achieves much wider national coverage than in other countries. UNICEF stated that everything it does is on a national level. Secondly, Government - Develop Partner coordination and consensus building should be relatively easier than in many countries. Thirdly, there are limited prospects for moving towards non-project modalities\textsuperscript{53}. It is clear that UNICEF has very strong relationships with senior policy makers.

The development and articulation of policies and strategies in Lesotho appears to be strong. However at the same time, progress in translating these into meaningful programmes for implementation is perceived by Development Partners to be relatively limited and slow. It is likely that capacity is overstretched as a result of multiple simultaneous policy initiatives encouraged by Development Partners. UNICEF supports a large number of ongoing policy/strategy initiatives. The sector plan has a large financing gap and the Government wishes to mobilize additional external resources, possibly through the EFA FTI. Spending on Higher Education is considered to be disproportionately high.

Suggestions for UNICEF


Firstly, UNICEF should focus on assisting MoET to operationalise priority strategies, rather than supporting new initiatives (unless essential). Secondly, it is suggested that UNICEF should discuss with MoET, DCI and WB, ways in which Development Partners might assist with the ongoing development of the SWAp. In particular, there may be an opportunity to provide technical advisory support to sector analysis and planning that can facilitate EFA FTI status. A key area is financial planning including support to education MTEF development. (Related to this, it should be recognized that whilst UNICEF support is largely national in coverage, this does not necessarily mean it can be institutionalised and sustained – additional resources and initiatives will be required for systemic scaling up).

\textsuperscript{52} DCI, UNICEF and the World Bank.

\textsuperscript{53} This is only likely to happen if other Development Partners provide greater momentum. DFID stated they will consider budget support in future depending upon development of Public Financial Management systems (which they currently support).
Malawi

Context

Malawi started the process of developing an education SWAp in 1999. Progress has been slow and the extent to which SWAp processes have been institutionalised is limited. External assistance to education is provided through project modalities with some limited trialing of a type of pooled fund through a special account in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST). In general the move towards non-project modalities had been limited in Malawi, largely it appears, because of Development Partner concerns about public financial management systems and limited Government capacity in general.

The development and finalization of the National Education Sector Plan in 2005 provides an opportunity to improve prioritisation of programmes and resource allocation. It is also an opportunity to strengthen sector management and MoEST – Development Partner coordination consistent with SWAp principles. In particular it is intended that a significant pooled funding mechanism will be initiated which is likely to provide earmarked funding to areas including primary curriculum reform, teacher education and teacher/school management. This provides an opportunity to scale up implementation of key strategies on a systemic basis and to accelerate education reform.

UNICEF’s support to education is the second largest in ESARO, after Ethiopia. This includes the start up of the substantial Schools for Africa Initiative project in 2006, including construction and development of schools, which will approximately double the value of the current UNICEF education programme.

Suggestions for UNICEF

UNICEF’s current Country Programme runs from 2002 - 2006. This will be followed by a one year ‘bridging’ programme to enable alignment of UNDAF and UN agency programmes with the national planning cycle, i.e. the next Country Programme will be from 2008 -2012.

As with Rwanda, the Schools for Africa Initiative project will significantly increase project management and is therefore likely to constrain opportunities for supporting policy and strategy dialogue and development. Firstly, it is suggested that UNICEF consider greater focus in its other project support areas to ensure resources are not overstretched on project management (this need was identified by the country office). Secondly, it is suggested that implementation of Schools for Africa ensures a clear focus on MoEST priorities. This should be done by piloting approaches that are agreed as having potential to be scaled up through pooled funding. Or, if further piloting is not seen as necessary then it should adopt approaches consistent with strategies agreed for scaling up through pooled funding, thus avoiding parallel approaches. Thirdly, UNICEF, in discussions with Government and Development Partners, should consider how they might assist with further development and institutionalization of SWAp, including possible short/medium term technical advisory support.

54 At least involving funding from CIDA, DFID and GTZ.
Mozambique

Context

Mozambique adopted an education SWAp around 1997/1998. Progress appears to have been mixed, one of the reasons being a large number of Development Partners some of whom have not fully embraced SWAp55. Whilst project proliferation and fragmentation remains, in recent years there has been a significant increase in the use of programmatic aid (it was stated that this now amounts to more that half the assistance to the education sector). A significant proportion of this is through general budget support. In addition, a potentially large volume sector pooled funding mechanism is in place (FASE), likely to increase in 2006. This is likely to provide significant additional resources for scaling up implementation of basic education including an increase in direct grants to primary schools, and in-service teacher development programmes.

UNICEF support will include the start up a relatively substantial project funded by the German National Committee (NatCom) in 2005/2006, including a focus on quality, Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC’s), girls’ education, lifeskills teacher training, and school management.

Suggestions for UNICEF

UNICEF’s current Country Programme runs from 2002 - 2006. This will be followed by a three year programme to enable alignment of UNDAF and UN agency programmes with the national poverty reduction strategy (PARPA) planning cycle, i.e. the next Country Programme will be from 2007 - 2009.

The NatCom funded project will increase project management and may constrain opportunities for supporting policy and strategy dialogue and development. Firstly, it is suggested that UNICEF consider greater focus in its scope of project support (this need was identified by the UNICEF country office). Secondly, it is suggested that implementation of the NatCom funded project ensures a clear focus on ministry priorities. This should be done by piloting approaches that are agreed as having potential to be scaled up through FASE. Or, if further piloting is not seen as necessary then it should adopt approaches consistent with strategies agreed for scaling up through FASE, thus avoiding parallel approaches. A potentially significant opportunity in this respect is the possibility of scaling up lifeskills and OVC programmes through FASE. A proposed pilot in cooperation with the World Bank, focused on reducing access barriers for OVC’s linked to an increase in the direct grant to schools, is a related opportunity in this respect. A further possibility discussed was assisting with technical support for establishing a bursary scheme targeted on poor/disadvantaged girls’ possibly as a pilot for scaling up through FASE. It might be appropriate to consider this type of bursary scheme for lower secondary education. Clearly any opportunities for assisting with scaling up through FASE will necessitate rigorous analysis and informed sector-wide policy dialogue.

Rwanda

Context

Rwanda adopted an education SWAp around 2001/2002. Considering the relatively short timeframe, progress appears to be positive. The Government has taken a very pro-active approach to promoting aid coordination and effectiveness. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning has developed a clear aid policy which outlines preferences for the use of aid modalities as, i) budget support, ii) pooled funding mechanisms and iii) project support.

A substantial level of general budget support is provided in support of a national poverty reduction strategy which gives high prioritization to the social sectors including education. However, whilst resource allocation matches this commitment there have been some concerns amongst the Development Partner community about budget execution and in particular, overspending in Higher Education. Partly as a result of this a sector budget support pooled funding mechanism is currently being finalised which will include a significant level of earmarking to basic education priorities. In addition MINEDUC is developing a pooled fund for TA and Capacity Building, designed to improve prioritization, alignment and ownership, and reduce transaction costs. In 2005, the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Scientific Research (MINEDUC) launched a strategy for Nine Year Basic Education including primary and lower secondary (Tronc Commun). MINEDUC also declared in 2005 that will develop a Minimum Quality Package (MQP).

UNICEF’s support to education includes the start up of the relatively substantial Schools for Africa Initiative project in 2006, comprising the construction and development of 50 model schools, based on the Child Friendly School (CFS) model.

Suggestions for UNICEF

UNICEF’s current Country Programme runs from 2001-2006 presenting an early opportunity to consider future strategies for support.

As with Malawi, the Schools for Africa Initiative project will increase project management and is therefore likely to constrain opportunities for supporting policy and strategy dialogue and development. Firstly, it is suggested that UNICEF consider greater focus in its other project support areas to ensure resources are not overstretched on project management. Secondly, it is suggested that implementation of Schools for Africa ensures a clear focus on MINEDUC priorities. It is intended that it will form the basis for developing and scaling up CFS as the MQP. If this is the case it will be necessary to undertake rigorous strategic analysis (including financial analysis) and adopt a flexible approach in terms of what will be realistically scalable and sustainable. Thirdly, UNICEF is in discussion with MINEDUC on the possibility of contributing to the TA and Capacity Building pooled fund. It is suggested that this would be a positive strategy in terms of alignment, engaging in policy dialogue and signaling commitment to partnership and Government aid effectiveness policy. A large proportion of initiatives implemented through the pooled fund will focus on areas in basic education consistent with UNICEF priorities.
Uganda

Context

Uganda adopted an education SWAp around 1997. The SWAp is considered to be the most advanced in the region. The Government of Uganda has outlined a strong preference for budget support and has successfully managed a substantial transition in the use of aid modalities. From a position of considerable project fragmentation in the mid 1990’s, the majority of external assistance is now provided through general budget support. A relatively small level of project support remains and is generally strongly aligned with Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) priorities.

Uganda has adopted an approach to ensure that all assistance, including project support, is captured in the Government budget. The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED) establishes sector ceilings and if assistance is provided additional to this, then it will either displace domestic resource allocation or will not be accepted. This is consistent with good practice in SWAp and aims to ensure that external project assistance is accountable and justified in terms of focus and value. It also aims to ensure equity in resource provision. This creates potential difficulties for ‘project’ Development Partners and it is reported that a significant amount of assistance is not being declared to MoFPED, including a large proportion of UNICEF assistance to the district level.

UNICEF is in the process of reconsidering its geographical focus of assistance. In particular it is planned that the Country Programme will focus on fewer districts concentrating on the disadvantaged conflict/post-conflict areas in the North including Internally Displaced People camps (where a substantial proportion of the current programme is focused). It is likely that the overall amount of the programme will remain similar or increase.

Suggestions for UNICEF

UNICEF’s current Country Programme runs from 2001-2005 so planning for the new programme is well advanced including plans for geographical refocusing outlined above.

It is suggested that the increased focus on the North is appropriate and appears to be appreciated by Government as a comparative advantage of UNICEF in providing support and developing approaches in areas where the Government is currently unable to. UNICEF should aim to systematically evaluate initiatives it supports in the North for purposes of ‘leveraging’ resources for scaling up. There may be a need for further technical support to assist Government in implementing Non-Formal Education following mainstreaming of the COPE programme. UNICEF is considering whether to maintain some support to demonstration Child Friendly Schools models (e.g. in Mbarara in the South West). It is suggested it might be more useful to test whether such models can be sustained without ongoing UNICEF support. Given the significant localized success of GEM clubs in Uganda it is suggested that UNICEF consider innovative approaches to scale up the initiative on a sustainable basis. UNICEF should provide information to MoFPED according to Government guidelines and widely agreed good practice.
Bibliography

The following documents have significantly informed the main body of the report and/or are quoted in the report. Many other country specific documents, comprising: UNICEF strategy, planning, programme/project and review documents; Government policy, planning and review documents; and other reports/studies, were also used.


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