Executive Feedback

Title of the evaluation: Evaluation of UNICEF contribution to health system strengthening. Final Synthesis Report

Sequence No: 2018/015
Region: HQ
Office: Evaluation Office
Coverage: Global

Evaluation Type: Thematic area
Year of Report: 2018

OVERALL RATING

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Satisfactory
Implications: Meets UNICEF/UNEG standards for evaluation reports and decision makers may use the evaluation with confidence

SECTION A: BACKGROUND (weight 5%)

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Highly Satisfactory
The report is strong at describing the object of the evaluation including the importance of the HSS approach within UNICEF in terms of its health programming. The report provides a description of the three functional levels of health systems, i.e. community, sub-national and national. It also provides a complete description of the initiative’s Theory of Change. Finally, the report clearly discusses the relative importance of the HSS initiative to UNICEF.

SECTION B: EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE (weight 5%)

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Highly Satisfactory
The report states that the evaluation has a learning purpose and a description is provided of that which the evaluation is expected to achieve. The intended use and intended primary users of the evaluation are duly described. Furthermore, the report describes in detail the programming, geographic and chronological scope of the evaluation, and a rationale is presented for the decisions made in this sense, including a justification for anything that was left out of the scope of this evaluation.

SECTION C: EVALUATION METHODOLOGY (weight 15%)

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Satisfactory
The evaluation used guiding criteria aligned with standard OECD/DAC, i.e. Relevance/Appropriateness; Efficiency; Effectiveness; Equity and Gender; Sustainability and Scalability, and key evaluation questions are used to guide the assessment. Furthermore, the full evaluation matrix is included in Annex C, which features evaluation questions, sub-questions, data sources, and methods of analysis. However, the report does not provide a justification for why the impact criterion was not included in the scope of analysis. The report is particularly strong at explaining a robust use of mixed methods including tools designed to allow systematic extraction of evidence against elements of the theory of change. Furthermore, data collection tools and methods are clearly listed and described in detail, including 17 country case studies (7 of which involved field visits), key informant interviews, focus group discussions, as well as an online survey. Similarly, the data analysis methods used for each data collection method are explained as well as the quality assurance process through triangulation of evidence from different sources and levels, and sampling methods are detailed. On the other hand, while methodological and operational limitations are correctly identified and explained, mitigation strategies of these are not consistently provided. Finally, the report discusses the ethical considerations applied during the conduct of the evaluation as well as the ethical obligations of the evaluators, which are contextualized.

SECTION D: EVALUATION FINDINGS (weight 20%)

Satisfactory

The report is strong at presenting findings that are supported by robust evidence that is drawn from different sources and they make reference to both the HSS initiative's strengths and areas for improvement. The findings are organized according to the evaluation criteria and so as to respond to key evaluation questions. Furthermore, key findings are highlighted and presented in boxes, and the initiative’s performance is consistently contrasted with the results framework. On the other hand, the report does not present a description and analysis of unintended positive or negative effects. Finally, the report provides a full and thorough analysis of the monitoring and evaluation system in place, its current functioning at the different levels of the HSS initiative and country offices, and provides extensive recommendations on ways monitoring could be improved.

SECTION E: EVALUATION CONCLUSIONS & LESSONS LEARNED (weight 15%)

Satisfactory

The report presents conclusions that are correctly drawn from the information discussed in the findings section. Furthermore, conclusions provide a deeper level of analysis as to the strengths and areas for improvement. Also, all of the conclusions integrate a forward-looking perspective and discuss foreseeable implications for UNICEF in this area. Finally, while some lessons learned may be discretely integrated throughout the findings, the report does not clearly identify them and discuss how lessons from this approach could be used to inform future UNICEF initiatives.

SECTION F: RECOMMENDATIONS (weight 15%)
Highly Satisfactory

The report presents particularly strong recommendations that are logically derived from the information provided in the findings and conclusions and that provide sufficient detail regarding their implementation. Also, the seven recommendations presented are very clearly organized and prioritized by indicating the strategic level to which they belong, in addition to specifying the target divisions within UNICEF for action in each case. Furthermore, the report presents a complete discussion around the process followed in developing the recommendations as well as the level of stakeholder participation in their validation.

SECTION G: EVALUATION STRUCTURE/PRESENTATION (weight 5%)

Satisfactory

The report follows a logical structure and observes the standard order of sections and subsections, which are clearly indicated. The opening pages of the report include most of the necessary elements to readily inform the reader about the name of the evaluation object, name of the commissioning organization, name of the evaluation firm, date of submission of the report, as well as a table of contents, and acronyms. However, the timeframe to be evaluated is not included and neither are the name(s) of the evaluator(s). Finally, the annexes present several elements that contribute to increase the overall credibility of the evaluation such as the Terms of Reference, the evaluation matrix, interviewed people, and data collection tools.

SECTION H: EVALUATION PRINCIPLES (weight 15%)

Satisfactory

Given the focus of the evaluation and the sample of respondents being policy makers, funders and implementers of HSS interventions rather than direct beneficiaries, the evaluation judged that the evaluation design did not need to explicitly use a rights-based framework. On the other hand, the report mentions the existence of an evaluation reference group constituted by UNICEF’s Evaluation Office that contributed to the evaluation beyond their role as informants in the formulation and validation of recommendations. The report correctly assesses the extent to which equity and gender considerations were integrated in the design and implementation of the initiative. Furthermore, the scope of analysis is strong at including gender and equity-related questions and sub-questions such as the effects of HSS programming in marginalized groups or the extent to which UNICEF support gender-sensitive approaches in its HSS programming. On the other hand, although the report points out the limited scope for the evaluation data to be disaggregated by gender or by using equity criteria given the source data and measures that were incorporated in the evaluation framework, the report could have specified the gender of the people interviewed. Finally, the report presents all evaluation outputs with explicit findings on equity and gender and this analysis cascades down through the conclusions and recommendations.

SECTION I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (weight 5%)
The report presents an executive summary that is both complete and succinct (5 pages) including a brief overview of the initiative, as well as the evaluation methodology, key findings, conclusions and recommendations. Also, the executive summary only includes information that is further developed in the body of the report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does the evaluation meet UN SWAP evaluation performance indicators?</th>
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<td>8</td>
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### Recommendations for improvement

This is a high quality evaluation that can be used with confidence by decision-makers. The evaluation uses a strong methodological basis and contains clearly presented, evidence-based findings that are supported by robust evidence as well as actionable recommendations. In the future, the evaluation manager may wish to consider including a question in the ToRs on the occurrence of any unintended positive and/or negative results. An analysis of such effects is oftentimes informative about the ways in which the object of evaluation or even other initiatives can be enhanced. The evaluation manager could also have asked the evaluation team to frame the evaluation around a rights based framework (in line with UNICEF evaluation standards) and could have explored with the evaluation team ways to make the methodology more gender sensitive, even if many of the data sources were UNICEF staff. For instance, sex disaggregating the interviewees would have demonstrated some sensitivity towards GEWE within the methodology. Finally, even though the object of evaluation is not a traditional programme, lessons learned from UNICEF’s systems strengthening approach could still add value to organisational knowledge. In the future, the evaluation manager may wish to consider asking for lessons learned to be identified. These should be presented within their own sub-section.

### Lessons for managing future evaluations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section A</th>
<th>This section observes good practices. No further improvement is required.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section B</td>
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<tr>
<td>Section C</td>
<td>Good practices recommend that any standard OECD/DAC evaluation criteria that are excluded from the evaluation be accounted for and duly justified. In this particular case, since the Impact criterion was not included in the scope of analysis, the report should specify the reasons for this. Additionally, mitigation strategies should be presented for all limitations identified.</td>
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<td>Section D</td>
<td>Good practices recommend that unexpected positive and negative results be identified and that an analysis of their occurrence and effects be presented. Unintended results are oftentimes instrumental in providing practical ways in which the initiative, approach, or strategy could be adjusted and enhanced in the future.</td>
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<td>Section E</td>
<td>It would add value to the report to include a section on lessons learned. Lessons learned should be understood as contributions to general knowledge stemming from the assessment of the object of the evaluation. They should therefore be formulated as general advice that could make them useful and relevant in other contexts.</td>
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<td>Section F</td>
<td>Recommendations observe good practices. No further improvement is required.</td>
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<td>Section</td>
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<td>Section G</td>
<td>The report should include all of the basic elements of information regarding the initiative and the evaluation. For instance, it is recommended that the timeframe of the evaluation as well as the names of the evaluators be included.</td>
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<td>Section H</td>
<td>Even though the evaluation did not engage directly with beneficiaries, it is still valid to frame the evaluation within a rights-based framework as access to health services is indeed a human right and a right for all children. It is also good practice for the methodology to mainstream gender considerations through, even if most of the informants are UNICEF staff. For example, specifying the gender of the interviewed people or sex-disaggregating the total number of informants would be desirable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Section I</td>
<td>The executive summary observes good practices. No further improvement is required.</td>
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