

## Voices from the Field

### **Evaluating advocacy: The challenge of learning from the invisible, by Michele Schmit and Alistair Gretarsson, UNICEF Thailand**



Advocacy is an important strategy in a middle-income country where most UNICEF work is 'upstream', focussed on normative or social change. However, it is this very nature of 'strategy' that makes advocacy quite 'invisible' in UNICEF Programme documents and results frameworks even though it contributes to most results.

UNICEF Thailand is conducting an evaluation of its advocacy work (currently in inception phase) aimed at distilling learning from past patterns and practices to be applied to the planning and implementation of advocacy initiatives in the current programme. The scope includes policy and public advocacy and is limited to initiatives that were started or ongoing during

the previous country programme (2012-2016). The evaluation will be based on a non-experimental case-study design to enable deep insights into what has worked (and not), why and under what conditions. Most and least successful advocacy efforts will be selected based on criteria around data availability, covering public and policy advocacy, use of multiple advocacy tools, engagement of a wide range of partners, multi-sectorality, and an obvious connection with advocacy priorities in the current Country Programme Document.

The evaluation team (consisting of an international advocacy expert/team leader, an international human rights law expert, an international evaluation specialist and a national research assistant) is larger than anticipated when writing the TOR; however, it is the right combination of expertise for this exercise. In addition, the team leader is familiar with complicated office dynamics on the advocacy 'function' due to past employment as an advocacy specialist in an international organization.

The evaluation is managed by the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) specialist supported by the Advocacy Communications officer. A reference group, consisting of the Chief of Communication (UNICEF Thailand) as well as the Chief of Communication/Advocacy and the Representative from neighbouring country offices, is providing strategic guidance. Quality assurance is provided by the Regional Evaluation Adviser and by the Country Management Team (CMT) who review the TOR and inception/ final draft reports. Given that the CMT includes all section chiefs, it helps ensure that the evaluation is utilization-focused.

UNICEF Thailand is excited to undertake this exercise that will help make advocacy more visible and better understood. The findings are much anticipated by all sections and we will be happy to share our experience (good or bad) with other offices.

For more details on this evaluation, please get in touch with Michèle Schmit, PM&E specialist, and Alistair Gretarsson, Chief of Communication, UNICEF Thailand.

### **Expanding Advocacy and Communication for Development to maximize results by Muktar Minbaev and Veronika Vashchenko, UNICEF Kyrgyzstan**



In 2016, UNICEF Kyrgyzstan conducted an evaluation titled [Evaluation of UNICEF Country Program \(2012-2016\) and Strategic Positioning](#) to assess strategic positioning and key strategies such as advocacy that were used to implement the current Country Programme in Kyrgyzstan. The country programme sought to support the government and civil society efforts to increase equity and the social inclusion of children who need protection, live in poverty and are at risk of ethnic violence.

The evaluation assessed the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the strategies used to achieve the Country Programme results and document lessons learnt. The evaluation used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to gather data on partners' engagement in the Country Programme design, implementation and their opinions on the

potential future role of UNICEF. Impact of the country programme was assessed through analysis of the country programme's contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Among others, the evaluation found that the country programme strategies were highly relevant and contributed to the achievement of expected outputs and outcomes. The advocacy strategy that was used and the use of evidence-based data to inform policy was considered as a best practice as it led to the development and approval of policies, national strategies and programs in various sectors such as health, HIV and Child protection.

The evaluation findings have been used by UNICEF and the Government to inform the development of a new Country Programme Document for the period of 2018-2022. UNICEF updated the communication and public advocacy strategy, introduced Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for communication and advocacy interventions. In addition, UNICEF also established a C4D Task Force to integrate C4D into programmes, and also prioritized three thematic areas to expand public advocacy and C4D namely early childhood development, rights of children with disabilities, and engagement of youth.

For more details, please contact Muktar Minbaev, Research M&E Officer and Veronika Vashchenko, Chief of Communication, UNICEF Kyrgyzstan.

