Background: UNICEF Angola Country Programme 2015 – 2019 aims to support Government efforts to reduce disparities in social indicators with a focus on the child population of Angola. To do so, the Country Programme (CP) pursues a systematic focus on interventions that have proven potential to benefit the most vulnerable individuals, families and communities. This learning-oriented evaluation was commissioned to provide lessons and recommendations on the progress made towards the results formulated in the 2015-2019 UNICEF ACO CP Action Plan and inform the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the CP. In addition, the evaluation was used to ensure that UNICEF Angola’s CP design was aligned with the new Government of Angola’s Strategic Plan (2018 -2022) and UNICEF’s Strategic Plan (2018 -2021). The evaluation performs an important accountability function, providing relevant units of UNICEF, the Ministry of Planning, the ESARO Regional Office, UNICEF headquarters, national stakeholders and partners with an impartial assessment of the results achieved so far.

Methodology: The evaluation used a non-experimental design, answering descriptive and normative questions. In basing the analysis on the theory of change, the components of the programme logic were identified as a hypothesis, with the intervention mechanisms used as assumptions.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The programme results of the CP are highly relevant, enabling UNICEF to better align and respond to the Angola Government’s priorities related to Child Survival and Development, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, Education, Social Policy and Child protection;
2. Despite the CPAP initially having been designed to provide institutional support to major priorities (upstream approach) a shift in national priorities has obliged UNICEF to redirect staff and resources to provide a direct delivery of commodities and services (downstream approach).
3. Considering the UNICEF Strategic Plan (2018-2021), there is an opportunity for UNICEF Angola to align more clearly with its priorities and strategies;
4. UNICEF’s work is highly valued by other UN agencies due to its reputation and high implementation capacity at provincial and local levels. It has been a strategic partner in several joint initiatives related to the areas of Health and Education and it has also demonstrated its leadership and effective capacity to coordinate and respond to humanitarian crises.
5. The high personnel costs of the office and the changing context related to the downward trend in resource mobilization and increase in humanitarian emergencies, might require ACO to restructure the office for the subsequent CP period.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Maintain the upstream intervention mechanisms (mainly capacity building and advocacy) together with a downstream approach with a focus on most deprived geographic areas, most deprived age groups, cross-cutting areas and oriented to local needs. It was recommended that:

- The Angola UNICEF CP be better aligned with the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021.
- Bearing in mind the frequency and complexity of humanitarian crises, UNICEF have better risk-informed programming and stronger systems for prevention, response and early recovery. Preparedness for humanitarian action in emergencies should be mainstreamed in all the programmes, as suggested in the UNICEF Strategic Plan (2018-2021).
- The expansion of the birth registration be maintained and reinforced, based on positive experiences such as the possibility of registration in schools or computerization in Maternal and Child Health Units.
- The organizational structure resulting from the change of ACO’s CP be analyzed, and that a mid-term strategy to update organizational and operating costs be defined.
- The M&E system be strengthened, moving towards a holistic results-oriented system for the whole CP based on the theory of change approach in use.

FACTS ABOUT THIS EVALUATION

1. Was commissioned and managed by the Country Office;
2. It received a highly satisfactory GEROS rating;
3. All recommendations were accepted by the Country office and management response developed and actions being implemented.

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Lessons Learned

1. Country Programme projects were effective where they identified policy innovations, especially at a local level, and assisted the Governments in devising ways to scale them up.
2. Programmes have been most successful where advocacy has been embedded into all activities, from policy support to service provision.