Evaluations should ideally serve all four functions, and the evaluation database supports the attainment of those functions. The latter part of the report analyses what and how well the current database serves its purpose. It is not our role to assess the evaluation function of UNICEF per se, but we would like to emphasise that weaknesses identified with the database should be sought both inside and outside the database itself.

We would also like to mention that organisations like the World Bank and UNDP use the evaluation databases as tools in results-based management. There is usually a difference between evaluations and performance measurement. In the World Bank, it is the project monitoring and assessment system which contributes to the measurement of performance - not the other broader sector or country evaluations. Sporadic evaluations do not provide a sufficient platform for a comprehensive results-based management system.

**Evaluation in UNICEF**

Monitoring and evaluation are not the only, but important tools to assess progress, impact and quality of UNICEF assisted programmes. In other words, evaluation helps to determine whether the organisation is living up to its commitments. M&E is in principle an integral part of UNICEF programming procedures. The basic UNICEF Handbook on M&E provides also clear definitions and guidelines ("Making a Difference", 1991). Several Executive Directives supports such guidelines and provides further direction for various forms of evaluations.

Despite the existence of clear guidelines and methodological support, evaluation has been a problematic and weak feature of overall UNICEF programming (Allemano 1996). It is said that evaluations are not systematically planned and designed, nor effectively used. Several reports have documented this weakness.

In 1992-93, a comprehensive review of UNICEF evaluations from the CD-ROM Evaluation Database covering 1987 to 1993 selected 144 studies and evaluation reports for qualitative analysis (Victoria 1996). The study revealed that of the over half of documents reviewed (60%) were rated either “poor” or “fair”. An additional 3% too incoherent to be rated. 25% were assessed as “good” and 15% “excellent”. While most studies reviewed lessons learned, less than 40% of the reports recommendations were firmly based on actual findings. Additionally, the recommendations were criticized for being too general and not adequately focused.

In 1993, MENARO prepared a regional report on findings and lessons learned, based on 20 evaluations conducted in the region. The report clearly signaled that projects were not designed with evaluation in mind, and a lack of a conceptual framework that identified key players and mechanisms for their interaction.

In 1996, a thematic evaluation based on 16 documents in the MENARO region was carried out (Allemano 1996) presenting similar findings: Reports lack executive summaries and terms of reference, and sometimes a clear purpose or research procedure. UNICEF had given little guidance about appropriate formats, preferred methods and reporting objectives. The weakest aspect was, however, the general failure to provide
practical findings for project development. The recommendations often amounted to nothing more than exhortations.

There is further little evidence that the recommendations have incorporated research and evaluation findings about similar projects in the same or in other countries. A final problem that affected most of the studies was the failure to link findings or recommendations to broader issues of human development. "The general mediocre quality of the studies reviewed indicates the need for more specific procedures on carrying out evaluation studies."

These findings point to the lack of a systematic practice and culture of evaluation. The emphasis seems to be more on the delivery of project inputs and financial accountability. There appears to be less importance attached to building evaluation strategies into programme development. Monitoring is taken quite seriously, but evaluation is not mandatory and seems be an afterthought and completely in the hands of Country Representatives.

Evaluation plans should be in place for all country programmes, but staff in the field is apparently not held accountable for those plans. The end result is often that evaluations are not completed, what is completed is of poor quality and in the end not properly used. All these features have its consequences on the status and functioning of the evaluation database.
3. OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS

3.1. Knowledge and Use of the Database

The following findings and observations are based on analysis of survey and interview data:

- **Access is still limited**

A basic requirement for knowledge and utilisation of the Evaluation Database is access to a computer where the database is installed. This means in practice a computer with a CD-ROM drive. Many country, regional and HQ staff have up to quite recently not been able to use the EDB for such a simple reason. This is changing rapidly, but represents still a constraint on use. In the meantime, CD-ROM is gradually being outdated as a medium for storing and disseminating large amounts of information by new Intra- and Internet solutions.

There is still 20% (16) in our sample without access to a computer with a CD-ROM. Almost all of them in Country Offices. Both HQ and Regional Offices seem to have upgraded their equipment faster.

It has also been pointed out by several respondents that the database is only available on one or two computers in an office. Programme Officers simply do not have or take the time to access a computer in another office than their own. Easy and simple access is emphasised as a precondition for use.

- **The Evaluation Database is not widely used.**

The EDB is not widely used. This assumption is confirmed by data from questionnaires and interviews. Almost 80% of the respondents have never or very seldom used the database at all. 32% (28) reports that they have never tried the database and 47% (41) seldom. There are a small number of active users - mostly M&E- and Programme Officers in Country Offices since they have to deal with the database as part of the annual reporting. ("The only time the database is used is when it is updated.") The reported use at regional and HQ level is very low. If we assume that the more active are over

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6 "In Kinshasa UNICEF there is no CD-ROM available". "The database has only been installed in UNICEF Luanda a couple of weeks ago."
represented among those taking time to fill in the questionnaire, the number of non- or low level is probably higher.

There are small pockets of active users - individuals with special interests in the database at all levels of the organisation, but no systematic or institutionalised use - in the sense that the database is an integral part of regular work. Utilisation is not driven by demand and need for what the database can provide, but to a larger extent by rules and requirements. The immediate and underlying reasons for such a pattern will be discussed later. The non-and low use does not mean that staff is not interested in any evaluation database, but the current EDB has constraints that need to be overcome.

We were also interested in people's perception about the extent to which other colleagues in the office use the database, and to what extent people/organisations outside UNICEF have expressed interest in the database. The patterns are clear. Close to 50% (41) reports no or marginal use by colleagues, and about one third does not know whether it is used. The same applies to expressed interest and use of the database from external people and organisations.

The same pattern was confirmed in the interviews at HQ and country level. The database is not widely used - mostly to meet annual reporting requirements and by interested individuals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Internal Use</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marginal</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>55.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very often</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Use</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marginal</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• The purpose and use of the database is unclear

There are seven stated purposes for the database (see 2.2.). In principle, there is no problem with multiple purposes serving needs of different users, but in practice it is not feasible to use an incomplete database effectively for annual reporting or for monitoring the M&E function in UNICEF. The point is that any database cannot serve all purposes, or as expressed clearly in one of the questionnaires:

"UNICEF should clarify the scope of the EDB. If it is sharing of best practices/lessons learned, then only good quality evaluations/studies should be included. If the scope is to monitor the M&E function, then all evaluations/studies planned and carried out should be included, behind the quality of data".

If we look at the actual use of the database, data from the questionnaire showed the following picture: The database is most often used for reporting and queries. The EDB is closely linked to annual reporting requirements and many country offices base their contribution on outputs from the database. Unfortunately, we have no data to determine how many COs actually prepare the overview of last years evaluations (Annex A in the Annual Report) on the database software and system.

The use of the database as a tool for policy development and advocacy/public information is less frequent, but figures should be used cautiously. The most striking figure is the large number of blanks. On average 50% has not answered the questions either because they have not used the database or did not spend sufficient time to think through the questions.

Factors Explaining the Low Utilisation of the Database

There are several interrelated factors explaining the use of the database. Some are immediate and simple and others more indirect and underlying. It is difficult to judge whether averages in the table below are representative and bring out the relevant factors in right order. At any rate, they point to important issues and appear plausible when compared with written comments and information from interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose for Using the Database</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Generate information for reporting and queries</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) When planning a new programme/project</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) For designing an evaluation</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) As a source of information about lessons learned</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) As a tool for policy development</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) For advocacy/public information</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(g) For monitoring the M&amp;E function</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Factors Affecting Use of Database

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The database is not available</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People are not aware of its existence</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The database is insufficiently promoted</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a general low interest in M&amp;E work</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation findings are not used</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content of the database is not relevant for my work</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of data and information is poor</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The database is difficult to use</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>(7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1= minimum, 4=maximum)

- **The database is not widely known in UNICEF**

There is a lack of knowledge and awareness about the database in UNICEF (2.7) since it is insufficiently promoted (3.0). Despite the fact that the database has been there since 1993 and repeatedly presented and supported in annual Executive Directives (see 2.3 d.), the awareness of the database is low. First and foremost M&E - and Programme Officers with the responsibility for reporting evaluations and studies. They provide inputs to and maintain the database as part of their duties.

In an environment where several initiatives compete for people's attention and awareness, the database comes low on the agenda. It is further perceived as a HQ initiative and said to be maintained mainly because of formal requirements. The database seems to have the "silent" support from the organisation, but it is not actively promoted by management as a useful tool for strengthening the evaluation function. On the other hand, the database has no "active opponents".

- **The quality of data is limited**

Quality of data in the database is a major concern. If you first find the report you are looking for, information could be missing or often not up to standard. This is not a good explanation for non-use, because it requires at least some use of the database. But a serious problem is illustrated. There is a lot of missing information in the database and the data which is there is often too general or of poor quality (inaccurate and does not provide a clear abstract of the report). Such gaps turn the maintenance of the database into a low priority task, which lead to even lower rates of compliance next year.

"A vicious circle is established where COs find the database incomplete, and they do little efforts to update the database, with the result that the next version comes out with still more incomplete information."
• The database is not considered user-friendly

A few years ago a CD-ROM was a technical innovation - a new medium for storing and disseminating large amounts of information and a relatively user-friendly way to do so. Standards for user-friendliness have changed rapidly. The current CD-ROM should not be difficult to use for most computer literate people - willing to spend a few minutes to install and learn the search function. In most cases, there are no major technical problems to overcome, and a user should easily be able to access all information in the database. There have been some technical problems, but survey data do not confirm that people have experienced major technical problems when using the database.

The problem is more that the speed and design are not up to current standards. The database appears "outdated". The design is considered far from elegant and attractive. The speed is low - you have to wait a few seconds for the search engine to bring the results. There is limited flexibility for preparing your own reports, etc. The database is perceived to represent the “past” in computer technology.

We are now talking about the use of the CD-ROM - not the procedures for entering data. There have been more technical complaints when it comes to entering information. A small sample of technical problems and issues are summarised in the next text box.

There is a clear perceived need to provide the database with a new software platform. Feedback from users and non-users is consistent. New technological options must be utilised which will be discussed later.

The database has to be attractive and functional in order to compete for attention. This seems to be a condition for potential use - actual use will require even more.

Based on discussions with users and analysis of survey data we are convinced that the technical upgrading of the database is necessary, but not a sufficient condition for more effective utilisation of the database. There are underlying factors determining use, which are related to the status, role and function of evaluations in UNICEF (see 2.5), which also need to be addressed.
• The systems for and culture of evaluation are not supportive for the effective functioning of a database.

Survey data reveals a general low interest in M&E work - combined with a perception that evaluation findings are not used. Interviews brought out clearly the lack of a strong tradition and culture of evaluation in UNICEF. Evaluations are carried out, but they are not mandatory. Evaluation reports vary in quality. The critical self-reflection as an input to program development is not common practice. Consequently, there is no strong need for an evaluation database. If evaluations were important and better institutionalised as part of the programme cycle, the database would have a stronger basis.

It was also mentioned that there is no search and research culture in UNICEF. Confronted with a problem, it is not common practice for Programme Officers to consult evaluation reports or studies.

"I believe the work so far undertaken on the database is laudable. It provides a very useful tool. The issue is not in the technical development, but more in the application. How do we ensure that it is more widely used? This is related to the issue of how we institutionalise the database. I believe what we need to do is to linking the database to the CP cycle.

We need also to make a distinction between the product (database) and the process (who and how the database will be maintained and updated). The database is as good as its inputs. However, I still believe that the fundamental issue is not the database, but the role of evaluation in UNICEF. How serious are we in applying lessons learned?"

The simple argument is that technical improvements of the database will increase the use up to a certain level - depending on its promotion and availability, but a strong and broadly used evaluation database is primarily a result of a strong and effective evaluation system - and an organisational culture that promotes and stimulates the active use of evaluation findings. Several of the interviews (HQ, MENARO and ICDC) emphasised that the formulation of a future database has to be linked to the discussion of the evaluation function in the organisation.

• An evaluation database is relevant and still needed

The need for a revised evaluation database is clearly expressed from the large majority. There is no questioning of the need and usefulness of an evaluation database. Many are critical to the quality and relevance of the current database, but not to the need for having a database. There are strong statements abandoning the existing EDB, but a parallel request for a new and better solution.

"The database is useful, but to heavy to handle in its present form. UNICEF has already many other tools to handle, and what we need is something more appealing, friendly and simple."

"This database is in the process of dying through lack of understanding of what it is used for. Mechanistic follow up by EPP, e.g. annual release of new CDs has been good, but the Evaluation Division efforts to improve quality and use of the database has been low."
"I think the database in its current format should not be continued. Best to put all the documents and the database on the Intranet."

**Annual Regional and Country Programme Reports and Use of the Database**

To what extent is the evaluation database used in the annual regional and country reports for summarising mid-term reviews and evaluations of country programmes? A brief review of regional reports to the Executive Board 1998 shows that none of them are referring to or use the EDB. Most of the analysis is focused on a few selected evaluations - or for the most part summaries of Mid-Term Reviews. The overall description and monitoring of regional and country level M&E work is almost absent. It is thus difficult to place the individual evaluation examples into perspective.

A stricter monitoring of the M&E function would have provided an overview and analysis of planned and implemented evaluations for last year. The first step would be to report on the implementation of the M&E plan (to check compliance). The current regional reports present more a collection of lessons learned - not a status report on evaluation in the regions, which would have required an evaluation database.

It is said in some of the reports that programme evaluation is taking stronger root, but it is important to provide empirical evidence for such a statement. Only the report from East Asia and Pacific region mentioned that for the period 1996-97, country offices in the region have carried out over 100 studies. "These include about 45 evaluations and a number of studies such as situation analyses, action research, needs assessment for formulating project strategies and plans, and reports on annual and mid-term reviews." (E/ICEF/1998/P/L.4)

The Report from the South Asia Region attempts to assess evaluation performance. It also states that "Priority to evaluation must be increased in UNICEF management culture in the region as an important part of developing a learning and knowledge-based organisation".

**3.2. Scope of the Database**

The next group of questions seeks information about what type of reports is currently included and should be included in a database. What are the characteristics and focus of an EDB? A database is different from both a historical archive and a general library with a broad range of reports and books. There are several interrelated questions:

- Should the EDB be limited to evaluations and studies commissioned by UNICEF, and strict selection criteria be applied?
- How to differentiate between studies and evaluations and other types of reports?
- Should also relevant reports conducted by others (e.g. donors) of UNICEF funded projects be included?
- What about thematically relevant studies and evaluations not funded by UNICEF?
- Should Situation Analysis Reports be part of the database?
- Should all evaluations and studies be entered into the database irrespective of quality and relevance, or would a quality control mechanism be desirable and feasible?
The first questions tries to establish what types of reports each office have been including in the database:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reports currently included</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All UNICEF reports</td>
<td>34 (26.8%)</td>
<td>19 (10.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected UNICEF reports</td>
<td>21 (16.5%)</td>
<td>32 (17.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All relevant evaluations</td>
<td>24 (18.9%)</td>
<td>28 (15.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All relevant studies</td>
<td>12 (9.4%)</td>
<td>40 (21.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All relevant evaluations</td>
<td>7 (5.5%)</td>
<td>45 (24.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situation Analysis Reports</td>
<td>29 (22.8%)</td>
<td>23 (12.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>127 (100.0%)</td>
<td>187 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Major findings are:

- A majority includes UNICEF reports only.
- There is little screening and quality control of what reports to enter.
- A relatively large number of evaluations of UNICEF funded programmes carried out by other donors are also included.
- Other thematically relevant studies are entered to only a limited extent.
- A small majority includes the Situation Analysis Reports.
- It was mentioned in interviews that evaluations, reviews and studies carried out by regional offices are not included.

A larger group of people responded to the normative questions of what kind of reports they would like to have in a future database?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What reports should be included?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All UNICEF reports</td>
<td>28 (8.8%)</td>
<td>55 (31.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected UNICEF reports</td>
<td>61 (19.1%)</td>
<td>22 (12.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All relevant evaluations</td>
<td>63 (19.7%)</td>
<td>20 (11.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All relevant studies</td>
<td>55 (17.2%)</td>
<td>28 (16.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All relevant evaluations</td>
<td>53 (16.6%)</td>
<td>30 (17.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situation Analysis Reports</td>
<td>29 (18.8%)</td>
<td>19 (10.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>320 (100.0%)</td>
<td>174 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are several interesting changes and similarities:

- A majority is now in favour of a screening process and a quality control of what reports to include in the database. It is considered as useless to fill up the database with any type of reports. A stronger quest for quality has emerged.
• There is also a stronger willingness to open the database for relevant reports - not commissioned by UNICEF.
• This applies first and foremost to evaluations of UNICEF supported programmes carried out by other donors, and less for thematic reports.
• A majority wants to include Situation Analysis Reports in the database, while a large group argues strongly that such a document is of a different kind and should be available somewhere else.

Several of the in-depth interviews conveyed other messages. They underlined more the importance of having a "focused" database. There are few limits to what a large group of people would wish to include. A broad scope will have a negative impact on quality. First priority should be to establish a database for UNICEF commissioned evaluations and studies - leaving out what could be of interest for individual offices and sub groups of staff. It was, however, suggested to prepare the new database with the possibility of adding alternative modules, for instance evaluations carried out by other donors, thematic studies and evaluations relevant for country programming. A generic and flexible database could allow for instance a Country or Regional Office to establish and maintain their "own" database for a particular purpose using the available software and systems.

The blurred distinction between evaluations and studies have been investigated by others:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Classification Problem: Studies versus Evaluations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A quality control of the database from 1994 shows a certain amount of misclassification. From the sample, 23% of evaluations should have been classified as studies, and 18% of studies should have been classified as evaluations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A meta-evaluation of UNICEF evaluation reports from 1995 (Victoria 1995) concluded that the database is fairly accurate in the classification of studies and evaluations. According to the reviewers, 77% of the evaluations and 82% of the studies had been correctly classified in the Evaluation Database. However, misclassification was common regarding whether or not the evaluation had dealt with impact.

The reviewers felt that 91% of the non-impact evaluations and 31% of the studies had relevant findings for possible reformulation of UNICEF supported projects. Some 10% were deemed to be worthless. Over one-third was judged to be unjustified in terms of costs relative to objectives and actual outcomes.

Compliance with the requirement of completion of the evaluation questionnaire by the evaluator has always been problematic.

• Should Situation Analysis Reports be included in the EDB?

The questionnaire asked in particular whether Situation Analysis Reports should be included in the EDB. The SA is a standard UNICEF document carried out for each country according to a five-year cycle. A majority was positive, but an important minority concluded “no”.

There are two lines of argument. The majority is of the opinion that the SA is such an important document and source of information from a country's point of view that it has to be in the database. It is also usually of high quality and well known.

The other group argues that since this report covers all sectors and all countries and is a well-known and used UNICEF document, it would not add any information to the database. It is neither a piece of research in the strict sense, but a review of other research and existing information. Research carried out in order to develop the SA could on the other hand be included.

3.3. Content

The next set of questions tries to determine what kind of information is found most useful in the database, existing quality, quantity and relevance of information and what kind of data should be included in a new database.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Useful Information in Current Database</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bibliographic information (type, title, author, etc.)</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme information (objectives, context, results, expenditure, etc.)</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report abstracts (findings, recommendations, lessons learnt, etc.)</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback information (technical comments, field review, follow up, etc.)</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two findings are that people perceive report abstracts as most useful and feedback information least useful. This means that people are looking for findings, recommendations, but mostly lessons learned. The reason for the low rating of feedback data could be that such information is to a large extent missing in the current database.

It is also emphasised that bibliographic information is important – the usefulness of simply having a list of evaluations and studies carried out. The next step would be to select and be able to get access to reports of special interest. Report abstracts are often found too general, inaccurate and meagre for programming, research or thematic studies. Researchers will often need the entire report or at least more than what they find in the current EDB.

In principle, reports can be ordered from HQ, RO or the relevant Country Office. In practice, this is not so easy. People are not willing to spend the time ordering the report or the time to wait. There is also a high probability that a copy is not available and found, because it was never sent to the Regional Office or HQ. A successful search in a Country Office will to a large extent depend on who you contact and his/her knowledge of reports prepared.

"Most of the time, information we are looking for cannot be found in the summaries, so if we could access the reports electronically, the database would be a more useful tool."

The Evaluation Information Sheet is said to be too comprehensive – asking for too much information.
“Many of the fields in the database is quite useless for COs – like methodology, programme information, etc.”

A clearer distinction seems to be required - between nice to know and necessary to know. UNICEF staff would like to have a comprehensive database with less information of high quality and easy access to the full text of the report.

**Changing Terminology**

It was mentioned several times in the interviews that categories and terms used in the database is partly outdated - reflecting defunct UNICEF policies and priorities.

“The options in the EDB are still child survival issues. It needs to be modified more in line with new and emerging rights issues for UNICEF.”

“As UNICEF programmes is moving from basic needs to human rights programmes, the scope and content of the database should be more rights-oriented.”

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**What the EDB Actually Contains**

It is said that the database is frequently incomplete, often only containing bibliographic details. In order to check whether this statement was valid, a review was carried out in 1999 (Kohlweg, 1999) to assess the quality and quantity of the completion rates of the evaluation sheets based on information from the 1999 EDB (EVALWIN 99) for the years 1997 and 1998.

- To which extent are the evaluation sheets filled in?
- How “good” is the quality of information provided?
- Are all summary sheets produced in 1997/1998 in the database?
- Do POs assess the quality of studies, reflect on lessons learned and recommendations?
- How many evaluation reports can be found in the library of the regional office?

Some of the main findings and conclusions were:

- Compliance is too low: The evaluation summary sheets are filled in poorly. Overall the highest completion rate for a summary sheet was 86% and the lowest 14%. The mean completion rate was 55%, but 43% of the evaluation sheets were filled in less than 50%.
- Out of the 88 summary sheets ten were defined as “poorly completed” since only 7-12 variables out of 43 were answered, 27 were considered as “inadequately completed” (less than 45% completed), 12 were “sufficiently completed” up to 60%, 25 “adequately completed” and 13 sheets identified as “satisfactory completed” with 77-86% accomplishment.
- Six variables were filled in by all (Year/Sequence number/Type/Thematic/Country/Region) and two categories were not filled in by anybody (ROSA Review/HQ review).
- Variables for which the report needs to be read rank low in the completion rate assessment.
- The qualitative analysis revealed that 26 reports categorised as evaluations were in fact studies (five were MIC surveys).
- Judging whether or not the text was understandable 66% of the summary sheets needed to be downgraded.
- As a summary of the quantitative and qualitative assessment 44% were regarded as being “very useful”, 13% “useful” and 43% of “not being useful”.
- 33 evaluation summary sheets attached to the Annual Report were not in the database.
- The analysis makes it evident that Programme Officers hardly assess the quality of studies and reflect on lessons learned and recommendations.
- Only five of the 88 evaluation summary sheets were found in the library of the regional office.
Quality, Quantity and Relevance
The survey asked for an assessment of existing data and information "applicable to your country or area of interest". Figures should be used cautiously. The most informative figure could be the combined score “don’t know” and “missing” – the highest for all three questions. This means that a majority did not have sufficient experience with and knowledge of the database to assess quality, quantity and relevance.

Reviewing the open questions from the questionnaire, it seems that people are least satisfied with the quality and quantity. Relevance is more taken for granted. People interviewed were also more critical to the level of quantity and quality than reflected in the survey. 23% said the quality of data was low/very low while 24% rated it good or high.

25% of the respondents said the quantity was low or very low, while 20% good or high. 25% assessed relevance to be very low or low, while 21% good or high.

"Evaluation Sheets contain a lot of useless information that clutters the form. A good abstract would be sufficient. The Sheets include research of extremely poor quality. The latter is caused by the mandatory inclusion of all evaluation reports that have been done by field offices – the same sheets are then used by the database and hence crap goes in."
Content of a Future Database
There are few and strong opinions about the future content of the database to be found in survey data. Report abstracts are a must. Bibliographic and programme information should also be included. There seems to be less enthusiasm for using the database for

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bibliographic information</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme information</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report abstracts</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback information</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance rating of programme</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance rating of evaluation</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full text of report</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

performance rating of programmes and evaluations – as some other organisations do. We will repeat that the absolute numbers behind the percentages are low, because so many did not answer the questions.

The need for stronger focus came out in several interviews: "There are too many fields at the moment. It is no need to divide between findings, lessons learned and recommendations."

"Data sheets need to be revamped, much simpler, a clear abstract, author, type of study, where to find the source document, etc."

Several people interviewed underlined the need for the full text of the report. It was suggested to make it mandatory to send all report to RO and HQ electronically and make all or a selection available through a new database placed on UNICEF Intranet. This option is feasible and several other organisations make their reports electronically available – either as full text or only Executive Summary.

A few people interested in methods for results-based management, saw the possibility of using the evaluation database as a tool in a more systematic performance monitoring. It was acknowledged that such use is relatively sophisticated and would require a much more comprehensive discussion in UNICEF.

It was said that UNICEF have come short in the discussion and formulation of any approach to results based management (RBM). Budgeting and investments are primarily based on the assessment of needs. Performance is not rewarded. It is here important to keep in mind that to maintain an evaluation database is relatively simple compared to establishing a RBM-system with the need for strong and sustained organisational discipline and management commitment.

Some people argued that since the database should function as a tool for improving the quality of evaluations, it should also include information on methodology.
3.4. Information Entry and Data Management

The next group of questions is focusing on systems and procedures for entering data and maintaining the database.

**Focal Person**
A large majority confirms that there is a focal person for entering data and maintaining the database in the office. This is often the M&E Officer if the office has such a person or one of the Programme-/Project Officers. Administering the database is one among several of their responsibilities and interviews confirmed that database maintenance is a low priority task. The time allocated to the task is often minimal - meaning that all data required is not entered and all relevant reports are not included. A control of quality is also missing.

"Smaller offices do not usually have M&E Officers. When the Programme Officer is also the focal point for M&E, such activities will suffer due to time constraints."

The question did not capture another important factor – the negative effects of a rapid turn over of personnel in most COs. A focal person is often the same as many and rapidly changing focal persons.

**Clear Routines and Procedures**
Of the few answers, about (33%) expressed that clear routines and procedures were established for entering data. A similar percentage was of the opinion that procedures were unclear. A fair conclusion is that the situations in country offices are extremely varied. The level of shared institutionalised practice is low. For maintaining a high quality global database, it is not satisfactory that only half of the Country Offices have and follow clear routines and procedures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are Clear Routines Established?</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%All</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marginal</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very much</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sum</strong></td>
<td><strong>87</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
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It is also commented that some of the rules should be changed: "Data update is only once a year. The tendency is that the database is only updated at the end of the year and usually information will have piled up so much that sometimes the database is not even updated."

Clear Selection Criteria
The same applies to the next question. A mixed group of reports are ending up in the EDB. Criteria presented by HQ are clear, but the interpretation is flexible or the criteria are not known in Country Offices. Flexibility in organisations is most often positive, but not when it comes to maintaining a global practice. In such cases, a high level of strict organisational discipline and consistent discipline over time is required - an area where UNICEF seems to get a low score. As expressed by one respondent: "In UNICEF we don't appreciate rules and procedures and avoid them if we can."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clear Selection Criteria?</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%All</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marginal</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some</td>
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<td>9.2</td>
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<td>Much</td>
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<td>18.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very much</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sum</strong></td>
<td>87</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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Compliance to Procedures
To follow up the last statement: 27% of the respondents openly admit that compliance to procedures and deadlines are from marginal to poor. Only 64 COs out of 138 updated the database in 1999, and this is more than previous years. Only 49 COs forwarded information to HQ in 1998. There are clear Executive Directives providing instructions and concrete guidelines for updating and using the database. Still, a large group of Country Offices do not comply with such procedures - and seem not to worry. There are many others in the same group - no sanctions will be applied from any corner of the organisation - and it is "just studies and evaluations".

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compliance to Procedures and Deadlines</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%All</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marginal</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Much</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very much</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sum</strong></td>
<td>87</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Suggested improvements of compliance are to clarify procedures and improve software. Data is limited and we believe that there must be other and more fundamental factors determining compliance. Organisations like UNDP has for instance improved compliance by making it mandatory for team leaders to fill in a standard summary form when an evaluation or study is completed. They are simply not paid if this form is missing.

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*We were told of a case where the entire Annex A one-year was forgotten - without any comment from either the Regional Office or HQ.*
Quality Control Systems
A few Country Offices practice some form of screening before entering information about a report, but the large majority does not have any form of quality control. It is difficult to determine what kind of screening process there is – based on what criteria. Our impression is that some reports are taken out – because it is obvious that they are neither study nor evaluations. But there is not a systematic assessment of content and relevance. One individual also mostly carries out the screening.

Quality Controller
37% (32) informs that the office has a person to control quality of data entries. This seems inconsistent with the low percentage reporting lack of systems and procedures for controlling quality. It is in principle possible to have a Quality Controller without quality criteria and procedures, but we tend to believe that quality controller is here identical with a focal person – assuming that he/she also performs the controller function.

There are also reasons to believe that the designated focal person works in a rather passive mode entering whatever reports are available.

"Make POs understand the reason for quality information and the need to write down their own opinions – not only cutting down and pasting whatever the researchers write."

Problems Encountered Entering Data
What problems were encountered in the process of entering data into the database? There are a few interesting findings:

The main obstacle is found to be the "limited interest among staff in the office". This could mean a lack of interest in providing information
(reports) for the data entry process or simply lack of interest in carrying out the task itself. The serious message to UNICEF is that the main constraint lies in staff motivation. When combined with a high score for limited awareness and support from management (2.8) and a perception that too much work is required for entering data (2.8), it is understandable that the data entry result is unsatisfactory.

"There is a lack of endurance and long term commitment in the organisation to make an evaluation database successful."

It is also interesting to note that the lack of a permanent focal person, training and technical problems in installing and using the software get a lower score than the other reasons. There are technical problems and a lack of knowledge in using the software, but neither are insurmountable. What makes it difficult is the fact that they are all compounded and aggravated by motivational and managerial constraints.

Who Should Manage the Database and Enter Data?
UNICEF follows a decentralised model for entering data, but HQ maintains the database at global level. This is in line with a deliberate policy of decentralisation with strong and to a large extent autonomous Country Offices. It also sounds right that Country Offices enter information of reports from their own countries. They should have the best oversight and knowledge about such reports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL FOR ENTERING DATA</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>MISSING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Current practice where data is entered by country office</td>
<td>38% (33)</td>
<td>48% (42)</td>
<td>14% (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Data entered by country office and reviewed by HQ before inclusion in the database</td>
<td>24% (21)</td>
<td>62% (54)</td>
<td>14% (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Data provided by COs, then reviewed and entered by HQ</td>
<td>10% (9)</td>
<td>76% (66)</td>
<td>14% (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Data provided by COs, then reviewed and entered by RO</td>
<td>24% (21)</td>
<td>62% (54)</td>
<td>14% (12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The previous sections have, however, illustrated the "costs" of decentralisation – low compliance, lack of "organisational discipline" meaning adherence to global rule, no sanctions or fear of sanctions for non compliance, low or varied quality control, etc. A more centralised model could have ensured higher levels of consistency and coherence through more standardised application of the same criteria. On the other hand, there would be costs in terms of lower involvement and participation from some of the main users of the database.

It is interesting to note that UNDP, the World Bank and IFAD all follow a centralised model for data entry, and argue that this is the approach for securing quality. But the organisational contexts are different. All the three agencies have a much more centralised evaluation function than UNICEF, and at least UNDP and IFAD carry out a smaller number of evaluations every year than UNICEF. In IFAD the Central Evaluation Office carries out all evaluations.
But the argument about quality and coherence is still valid. It is not within our mandate to judge, but it seems that UNICEF has not managed to strike an appropriate balance between decentralisation on the one hand, and adherence to a set of rules and regulations for maintaining necessary global functions on the other. For decentralised systems to be effective they most often require strong “rules of the game”, strict compliance, and a combination of incentives and sanctions to make that happen.

“We will underline the importance of strong HQ involvement. Developing, synthesising and sharing knowledge are major functions for the central level. No one will benefit if this functions breaks down or is not taken care of seriously.”

It is interesting that a majority (38%) of the respondents supports the current practice of entering data by Country Offices. There is a relatively strong objection to a review or quality control function by HQ (62%) as suggested in model (b). If a Country Office model should be abandoned, the preferred alternative would be to let the Regional Offices take over the responsibility for reviewing and entering data. The latter is interesting and consistent with the role of regional offices in UNICEF. The subsequent response from ROs is that such an arrangement would require additional resources.

The Feasibility of Quality Control
The issue of quality control of reports is complex. Not only because quality is in the eye of the beholder, but also for practical reasons. For a period of time staff in the UNDP Evaluation Office read and reviewed all evaluation reports before they were entered into the database. When the number of reports increased, the system broke down.

A central level quality control system for an organisation like UNICEF is most likely not feasible. It will imply that HQ staff will have to review all reports and only enter those reports meeting agreed criteria and standards. The alternative is not necessarily to leave out any quality control from the process.

The long-term strategy should be to strengthen the quality control by those commissioning the studies. Extremely poor reports should not be produced and paid for! Regional M&E Focal points could also play a role in quality control since they most likely will have to read all/most reports.

Some ROs complained that there is no real role for them in the management of the current database. The major link goes directly from COs to HQ – and ROs receive information too late.

“We receive files as read-only files and are not in a position to make any changes. We also receive them too late. How can we then play a role in controlling quality?”

Links to other corporate databases (ProMS)
We were also asked to discuss how the evaluation database could be linked to other IT initiatives, such as ProMS and Intranet, in order to make use of existing resources. The link to Intranet will be discussed in the next chapter. Questions about the relationship between the evaluation database and UNICEF’s new programme management system
(ProMS) was not included in the questionnaire, but discussed with some of the informants at country and regional level.

It is our impression that the ongoing introduction of ProMS has caused a lot of frustration in country and regional offices. It is acknowledged that such a system is required, but the process of introducing it has been and still is painful. To discuss the reasons is outside our mandate.

There are potential links between the evaluation database and ProMS which should be developed over time and addressed in the preparation of the new EDB. The most obvious is that the ProMS should eventually contain basic information - also financial data - on all evaluations and studies carried out by country and regional offices. The system should be able to produce the list of reports and simplify the identification and data entry process. Links could also be established between the various databases. UNDP and The World Bank have established such links in their databases.

3.5. Accessibility and Data Outputs

Responses subsumed under accessibility reflect that:

- The reporting system is not sufficiently flexible. Some interviewees also expressed the need for more individualised options, but this is not a strong demand.
- The procedures (e.g. search functions) are found satisfactory.
- There are no strong negative feelings about the CD-ROM as such. It is just that there are other alternatives - faster and more user-friendly.

Since few have used the database, responses are few and validity of findings low. Compared with interview data the findings above seem reasonable.

Medium for Retrieving Information

There has been some dissatisfaction with the CD-ROM as a medium for storing and retrieving information. When the database was established, it was the best and maybe only option. The rapid technological development has created other and better alternatives. There is just a few (4%) who wants to continue with only the CD-ROM. The suggested alternative is to have the database as part of the UNICEF Intra-/Internet – making it possible both to enter data and retrieve information electronically.
The Evaluation Database could for instance be included in the "UNICEF Document Repository". "Electronic copies of originals could be on the Intranet with pointers and limited information on CD-ROM, or even an Intranet site with excellent search facilities."

The UNICEF Document Repository is a key part of the UNICEF Intranet. It provides "one stop shopping" for UNICEF documents: a single location where you can find the entire key documents. In June 1999 the Repository contained 2500 documents. These documents cover a broad spectrum of UNICEF work and include:

- Key Programme Documents
- Executive Board Documents
- Executive Directives
- Supply Directives
- Public Information Material
- Administrative, Financial and other related documents.

The clear message is to use both the CD-ROM and Intranet. The arguments are that some UNICEF Offices do not have a reliable Internet-connection and it takes too much time to download large documents. It is also mentioned that a CD-ROM will make the database available also to external partners, since they do not have access to UNICEF Intranet. The combined solution should not create any technical problem since CD-ROMs can be prepared directly from Intranet.

Evaluations in the Public Domain?
A few argued that the entire evaluation database should become a part of UNICEF's Homepage - making all reports public. It is a clear trend in other organisations to make information - also full reports - available for public consumption. IFAD and the World Bank have so far made a compromise - since only a part of the database is in the public domain, but IFAD will soon move the entire evaluation database to their Homepage. A new disclosure policy has just been approved, making such a move necessary.

Does UNICEF have to keep some reports confidential? Or can all reports easily be presented through Intra- or Internet? A problem is that UNICEF has no clear policy on this issue - and to some extent a disputable practice. The organisation is not perceived to be among the most open and willing to share critical reports. Another problem referred to in interviews is the embarrassing low quality of too many reports, and consequently an unwillingness to share and distribute such reports.

"The quality of too many evaluations is unacceptable low. It is often very difficult to draw any lessons from them. A high quality EDB depends on high quality evaluations."

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8 To illustrate how rapid changes are taking place, and internal UNICEF memo argued quite recently that Internet could not be used. "During a recent meeting... it emerged that the Evaluation and Research Office was considering disseminating the information contained in the evaluation database by establishing a Home Page on the World Wide Web. While this would be an attractive way of publishing the information, I suspect this would have a very restricted UNICEF audience since access to WWW from field office locations ranges from being somewhat expensive to largely non existent."
3.6. Satisfaction with the Database

The last section in the questionnaire seeks to capture some overall sentiments and judgements about the database.

**Do you find what you are looking for?**
It is alarming that 37% concludes that they to only a marginal or some extent find what they are looking for in the database. A tiny fraction is well satisfied, while there is a 20% group relatively satisfied with what they find. This is probably a group with modest/realistic expectations of what to find and knowing exactly what to look for.9 Gaps in information (missing reports and missing data from each report) have to be removed for improving the level of satisfaction.

"The EDB does not do the job. It is very time consuming to maintain and I don’t think that the relevant fields provide adequate quality information for the users."

**Does the information meet your needs?**
A large group does not answer the question. A key message is that information in the database to only some extent meets the needs of the users. It is also unfortunate that there are few — if any enthusiastic users of the database. Most initiatives need "champions" for promoting and marketing their advantages.

A more fundamental problem is the information saturation or overload. The problem is most often not lack of, but too much information. Programme Officers feel they have too much information already and are certainly not looking for additional sources of information. People in such situations prefer more informal means of communications.

"When there is an information demand, it is often linked with a rapidly approaching deadline. There is no time for ordering the documents seen in the database. The documents need to be available right away otherwise it is too late."

9 "The database is not bad if you acknowledge its weaknesses."
Do You Trust the Quality of Data?
If people do not expect to find what they are looking for in the database, they would most likely not search. If they find what they look for, but do not trust the quality and relevance of what they find, it undermines not only the use, but also the legitimacy of the entire effort of maintaining the database.

An unacceptable high level of people does currently not trust or has too little confidence in the quality of data. This is a serious challenge for the revision of the database. A new database needs to be perceived as something “completely new” and not simply as an improved revision of the current one. Credibility and legitimacy can be built by incremental actions, but such a process is often long and fraught with risks.

Would You Miss the Database?
We will repeat that it has not been suggested to abolish the database, but to abandon the current version. Few will miss the existing database, but among those who answers the last question at east 20% expresses appreciation for what is available and what has been achieved. It is more in the EDB than most of UNICEF staff believes. A new format is required, but the most important is to make the database easily available and relevant to needs in the process of planning, implementation and evaluation.
4. OTHER CORPORATE DATABASES

Other international organisations have their own evaluation databases. We have looked at UNDP, The World Bank, UNFPA and IFAD\textsuperscript{10}. The main purpose of the chapter is to present their use and experience with the evaluation database. The evaluation context in which the database is placed is also briefly explained. Some findings are already used in the previous chapter.

4.1. United Nations Development Fund (UNDP)

CEDAB: Institutional Memory on Lessons Learned

In support of organisational learning, UNDP maintains its Central Evaluation Database (CEDAB) as the institutional memory on lessons learned from programmes and projects that have been evaluated. It is mandatory for evaluators to submit, along with their evaluation reports, a Project Evaluation Information Sheet (PEIS) containing information to be entered into the database. In the event that no one from the evaluation team prepares a PEIS, the UNDP country office or HQs unit managing the evaluation must hire a person to do this task and the costs will be charged against their budgets.

UNDP is in the process of revising its current database - not for technical reasons, but to better reflect their new results based management approach, and also to make it more interactive.

Content and Management of the Database

The database has two parts: one that is public and another internal. Only project evaluations are included in the database. The evaluators fill in the Project Evaluation Information Sheets. All data is entered at Headquarters in order to maintain consistency and quality of information. There was initially a quality control at HQ of all reports, but with the increasing number of evaluations the system could not be maintained.

It is emphasised that Country Offices need quick access to user-friendly information. They have often no time to read a full report. The PEIS provides therefore a broad overview of the report (See Annex 5). It is acknowledged that some people will also need the full text. This is not directly available in the CEDAB, but via a hyperlink to another system.

The central evaluation office (OESP) in UNDP has the mandate to check and enforce compliance. OESP monitors and reports on the compliance rate for mandatory evaluations to the Administrator, who then reports it as part of the Annual Report to the Executive Board.

The software platform for CEDAB is Oracle and SQL server. The cost of establishing the system in UNDP was said to be between US $ 500 000 and 700 000.-

\textsuperscript{10} The findings from UNFPA depend on secondary material only - not any visits.
Use of the Database

The potential areas of use are:

- To check consistency of judgements.
- To use rating systems for trends analysis.
- To measure the relative number of programmes and projects covered by evaluation (for compliance reporting).
- To support thematic evaluations.
- To help generating lessons learned.
- For meta-evaluations.

The importance of a database at various stages of the project cycle is said to be:

(a) Pre-formulation stage: Searching for lessons learned.

The database facilitates the search for relevant lessons since they can be sorted using multiple criteria (e.g. sector, country, region).

(b) Formulation: Incorporating lessons learned and preparing a M&E plan which must be part of the design of a new programme.

(c) Implementation: M&E as support to decision making and learning

(d) Programme and project completion: Dissemination of lessons learned. Upon termination of a programme or project, stakeholders as a group must take stock of the experience that has been gained: successes, and failures, best and worst practices, future challenges and constraints.

Performance Rating System

The database contains a performance rating system - a system for assessing and forming judgements on the relevance, performance and success of development cooperation in a systematic and standardised manner. As part of the broader monitoring and evaluation framework, a rating system is said to have the potential to provide important inputs to decision-making at various management levels, support accountability and enhance the learning function of M&E.

The rating system that is used in the evaluation of programmes and projects is incorporated in the project evaluation sheet (PEIS). The PEIS includes questions for use by the evaluator in rating certain aspects of a programme or project by applying varying scales.

In the use of the database and rating system several critical issues have been identified:

- The need to rate programmes and projects for monitoring as well as evaluations.
- The need to improve the structure of the PEIS in terms of the types of questions it contains as well as the way in which the questions are grouped.
- The need to adopt a uniform rating scale to facilitate trends analysis.
- With respect to the rating scale, issues pertaining to the delineation and number of categories and the choice of numeric, alphabetic or descriptive categories needs to be addressed.
Strengths and Weaknesses
The database is well established. UNDP has also invested significant resources in building the database. Making CEDAB available within the entire organisation represents a significant step in improving access to lessons that have been gained from experience. It provides OESP with the opportunity to obtain feedback from staff at HQ and in country offices on the quality and usefulness of the information provided by the database.

The evaluation function in UNDP is more centralised than in UNICEF, and OESP has an overview of all evaluations carried out and a role to play in setting guidelines for evaluations. This has a positive effect on compliance. The incorporation of the rating system in the database has the same effect. It becomes important for staff to enter information from all reports into the database.

The very centralised system for data-entry and database management makes it vulnerable, and could reduce the sense of ownership at other levels of the organisation. We have no information from UNDP to what extent the database is used for the agreed purposes, and found relevant at all levels of the organisation.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles of OESP Evaluation Office</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monitoring and Evaluation Policies</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Develops policies and guidelines on monitoring and evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Monitors compliance with evaluation requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development of Methodological Innovations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Develops methodological innovations, such as the evaluation of interventions under the programme approach, participatory evaluation, performance measurement and impact assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conduct evaluations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Initiates and manages evaluations, including strategic evaluations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(e) Assists regional bureaux, country offices and funds in association with UNDP in organising evaluations.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lessons learned</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(f) Assesses trends in programme and project performance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(g) Maintains and updates CEDAB, which contains lessons and other relevant information from evaluation reports, and provides other UNDP units at headquarters and in the country offices with access to CEDAB.</td>
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4.2. The World Bank

Evaluation as Knowledge Management
Evaluation in the World Bank serves several functions. It is increasingly focused on feedback to assist management in decision-making. Secondly, it should become more participatory through the active involvement of borrowers, co-financiers, NGOs and beneficiaries. Third, evaluation is emerging as an important input for knowledge management by identifying best practices and informing the policies of the World Bank and its member countries.

Evaluation in the Bank has two major dimensions:

- self-evaluation by the units responsible for particular programmes, and
- independent evaluation by the Operations Evaluation Department (OED).

Evaluation Instruments
(a) Review of Implementation Completion Reports
Regional staff evaluates all completed operations for which they are responsible. For each operation, regional staff prepares an Implementation Completion Report (ICR). OED reviews all ICRs to assess and report on their quality, collect evaluation data for aggregate analysis, extract findings and recommendations useful for new operations, and select operations to be audited. On the basis of independent review of each ICR, including consultation with the responsible operational staff, OED makes available to the Board and all Bank staff an evaluation summary that comments on the quality of the ICR, the performance rating of the operation, the lessons to be drawn, and whether the operation is a candidate for performance auditing.

Two products come out of this process to be included in the database:

- The Project Information Form (PIF see Annex 5) which is an internal document consisting of a broad range of information, including the performance rating.
- The Evaluation Form (see Annex 5) which is less structured and provides a broad overview of findings and conclusions. This information is placed on the World Bank Intranet.

The building blocks of the independent evaluations are:

(b) Performance Audit Reports prepared by OED on the basis of reviews of ICRs and fieldwork for a sample of investment and adjustment operations. They validate and augment the information provided in the ICR, but they also examine issues of special interest. OED currently audits about 25% of the Bank's lending operations. In selecting operations for audit, preference is given to those that are innovative, large or complex, those for which executive directors request audits, and those that are likely to generate important lessons.
(c) Impact evaluations attempt to assess the performance of projects at full development, which usually occurs five to ten years after the close of disbursements.

(d) Sector Impact Evaluations are a relatively new product. They examine the relevance of the Bank’s objectives in a specific sector and country/region.

(e) Country Assistance Reviews. The unit of account for evaluation is gradually shifting from individual projects to entire country assistance programmes and global development initiatives. Country Assistance Reviews (CARs) are evaluations that take the country as the unit of account and concentrate on the relevance, efficacy, and efficiency of the Bank’s overall program of assistance, as well as its sustainability and its impact on institutional development. The CAR is selective as to time span, instruments, sectors, and issues covered. The focus is on issues that are relevant for government and Bank decision makers.

(f) Thematic Evaluation Studies use findings from independent completion, audit, and impact evaluation reports, supplemented by further investigation, to prepare evaluation studies.

(g) Annual Review of Development Effectiveness is a synthesis of findings. It presents the evaluation results for operations that existed the Bank’s portfolio in the financial year, and it relies on the performance scoring system from the Project Completion Report.

The Database as Institutional Memory
The database has as mentioned two parts:
- Information from a comprehensive “Project Information Form”.
- The OED review of ICR – a more focused Evaluation Summary.

The database that OED uses for its annual review provides information on the operational performance of all completed Bank operations. The data, which are derived from more than 4500 completion reports and performance audit reports, include ratings of overall outcomes, institutional development and sustainability, as well as other variables such as economic rates of return, project costs, delays, and loan cancellations. Data are available to all Bank staff to help plan operational programs. Additionally, summary tables prepared as background for the “Annual Review of Development Effectiveness” are available through the Internet.
Results Based Management
With the rating system, the Bank's database becomes much more than a list of documents. It is an integral part of their results based management system. It is one of the most important tools to assess borrower and Bank performance through the aggregation of results for sectors, countries, etc. To fill in the form and using the system are part of standard procedure for all staff. Lack of compliance is no problem. Non-compliance is so visible, the rating is a priority in the Bank and there is strong organisational discipline. The effectiveness of the database reflects also the strength of the evaluation system.

The Bank has adopted a rating system that requires considerable investment of time and resources. First, self-evaluation through the ICR system, Second, independent OED staff review. Reports are further subject to spot checks by a sub-committee on Development Effectiveness. Lastly, a selection of operations is audited by OED.

An Integrated Information Management System
Efforts to build the database are seen as an integral part of an overall information management system. With an increasing decentralisation of staff and functions from HQ and strengthening of regional and country offices, access to and flow of information becomes increasingly important. The evaluation database is thus placed on the Intranet and inter-linked with other databases and systems. The system enables staff to work together independent of HQ. The full text of reports is also increasingly available through Intranet.

- The database is used for several purposes:
- For preparatory reports.
- To compare projects - trends analysis.
- For research.

The software platform for the database is currently Paradox for Windows. This system is found not easily compatible with Windows NT. Lotus Notes will soon be introduced and replace the old software.

It is difficult to estimate the cost of the World Bank database - since it is part of an integrated system. The cost of software and adapting the system to Bank requirements is said to be low. There are further few direct costs relating to entering data since OED staff does it themselves, but the entire internal evaluation system with a double review of all projects has to be costly in terms of staff time. The creation of the web site and integration of the database for effective use on the Intranet have required a lot of resources. OED has not covered that part of the cost.

There is a high demand for information and data in the Bank. OED has a special Helpdesk with three people just to respond to internal and external (e.g. research institutions) requests for information.
Training in the use of the database and information system is offered and organised for all Bank staff. The database and information systems have also been well promoted within the Bank.

4.3. United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA)

System Characteristics
The evaluation database in UNFPA was established to strengthen the evaluation system. Together with the evaluation report, a standard evaluation questionnaire is to be submitted to facilitate data entry in the computerised database. This questionnaire has been designed to extract the most crucial evaluation information in the form of logical (yes/no) replies to a series of closed questions, which are complemented by open-ended questions, textual comments and clarifications. The questionnaire is intended for completion by evaluators of UNFPA assisted projects (Annex 5).

The questionnaire consists of five main sections. The Evaluation Description and the Project Description for the two introductory identification sections. The core evaluation findings section is sub-divided in five sub-sections on project design, project implementation, project performance, women's concerns and sustainability. The fourth section provides more open-ended, textual information from the evaluator on lessons learned.

The design of the questionnaire is in line with the Project Evaluation Information Sheet (PEIS) of UNDP, but places more emphasis on textual comments. The questionnaire concept is substantially different from the UNICEF Evaluation/Study Summary Sheet, which is a compilation of textual abstracts on findings, recommendations, lessons learned and technical comments. In addition, the UNICEF form incorporates evaluation review comments by COs, ROs, and HQs.

The questionnaire section on evaluation findings contains 74 closed questions and 17 open-ended topic-specific questions. By far most are related to project implementation issues.

With the 74 closed questions, a structured rating system was introduced for the UNFPA evaluation database.

The relevance of the comments provided in relation to the topics concerned is said to be questionable in a number of cases. It may well be that these open ended questions are one of the main reasons for the limited compliance with questionnaire completion requirements.

The initial problems with the computerised database programme was relating to the fact that the system did not produce any outputs. The design of the database programme was "input-format driven" or "information supply driven" rather than "information demand driven" from the perspective of the users. The well-designed evaluation questionnaire at
the data entry side was not matched by any standard report or table query format at the output side of the system.

Compliance with the requirement of completion of the evaluation questionnaire by the evaluator was problematic.

An Evaluation Summary Sheet
In a review of the UNFPA database it was suggested that the Evaluation Summary Sheet should contain the following information:

1. Identification of project evaluation
   - Description of the project
   - Description of the evaluation

2. Rated evaluation findings
   - Project design
   - Project implementation
   - Project performance, success and sustainability

3. Evaluation abstracts
   - Findings
   - Recommendations
   - Lessons learned

4. Filed Office comments on the evaluation

5. Lessons learned.

Software Platform
The data entry module is programmed utilising software package Folio Views 3.0. Folio Views was selected because of the positive experience with this software in the UNFPA Library. It appeared later to be unfit to generate the requested output reports and statistics. The inability of the developed software package to generate the expected output reports was the single most important reason for the limited success of the evaluation database in relation to its envisioned functions and purpose.\(^\text{11}\)

4.4. International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

New Evaluation Strategy
IFAD carried out a review of the adequacy of its evaluation function in 1999, which prompted the Office of Evaluations and Studies (OE) to embark on a strategy development process that led to a new approach to evaluation. OE conducted also 25 major evaluations in 1999. All evaluations were carried out from the central evaluation office.

\(^{11}\) We are not aware of what happened with the database after the report was completed in 1997.
Main findings of a user-survey conducted as part of the meta-evaluation were that OE tended to overemphasise the concept of independence, and evaluations were not always sufficiently geared towards practical solutions that would lead to improved performance of IFAD’s policies and operations. It was also recognised that for evaluation to contribute to concrete improvements, it is essential to understand how and who uses evaluation feedback and recommendations.

Four main features should therefore characterise the new approach to evaluation: First, partners and their needs should take centre stage. The second feature is to transform each evaluation into a systematic learning exercise geared towards improving performance as a contribution to IFAD’s management for knowledge.

Although project evaluations are important, they are not the most cost-effective instruments. Through thematic, country and other programme evaluations, it is possible to have a multiplier effect and impact on several projects, programmes and policies, and to generate the knowledge that IFAD requires most. It is important to move to a higher plane and increasingly deal with the synthesis and analysis of the Fund’s accumulated experience across countries.

Fourthly, the new evaluation strategy recognises the need for OE to evaluate continuously the validity of its work. The performance of future evaluation work will be gauged by the adoption and actual use of the solutions it provides.

Knowledge Management through Evaluation
Because learning is at the heart of its business, OE is committed to transforming evaluation into a systematic learning exercise that can be shared with its partners. This will be OE’s main contribution to IFAD’s knowledge management.

The need to manage knowledge efficiently is a priority concern for OE. This includes finding more efficient ways to store and disseminate knowledge and evaluation products.

OE tools for knowledge storage, retrieval and dissemination include the Evaluation Knowledge System (EKSYS) and IFADEVAL (the Internet version of EKSYST) available through IFAD’s website. During 1999, EKSYST was made available through CD-ROMs, increasing the ability to disseminate evaluation results to stakeholders. In 1999, a review of these systems was initiated for completion in 2000, the aim being to explore ways to enhance the use and relevance of these tools. The review will go on to assess the quality and the coverage of EKSYST and IFADEVAL knowledge contents, with a view to identifying the areas in which the system requires improvement.

In 2000, OE will develop a strategy for disseminating its evaluation products and expanding communication among the community of users. OE intends to improve the design and functionality of EKSYST/IFADEVAL and assess the need and feasibility of other instruments for distance learning and exchanges of knowledge which has become possible with the rapid increase in web-based communication and the potential for
extending Internet access to most of OEs partners and the broader development community.

**Functioning of the Database**

EKSYST was conceived as a tool to generate, store and share evaluation-related information. The information contained in EKSYST may assist the user in designing rural poverty alleviation programmes or in redirecting activities during project execution. It also intends to provide inputs towards specific research activities and thematic or sectoral studies, and can be used to conceptualise new lessons learned.

Executive summaries for evaluations were used for the database. They are gradually working to standardise the information. What makes it manageable is the relative small number of evaluations carried out in a year and the fact that the central Office of Evaluation and Studies manage all evaluations. The status and support of evaluation in IFAD is strong. The Division has about 20 staff and reports directly to the President and a Governing body for evaluations.

Experience with the actual use of the current database is mixed. The user survey indicated a relatively low level of use. The part on lessons learned was the most visited, but also criticised for being too general. People are looking for practical solutions. EKSYST is meant for designing new projects and programmes, and in improving existing or developing new policy approaches.

Full reports are not yet available on the web. IFAD will soon implement a new disclosure policy meaning that all evaluation reports have to be available for the public.

At the moment OE has a PC version of the database on a CD-ROM, which is based on Microsoft Viewer software platform. IFADEVAL is a more limited version on the Internet - not Intranet. The system currently contains information on more than 150 lessons learned on a range of topics, and these may be accessed by a specific theme, country or region. EKSYST also includes approximately 200 executive summaries of evaluations carried out since 1990.

The same format and functions are available from the Internet database. IFAD's aim is to move the whole database to Internet. The estimated cost for establishing the PC database and the web site was approx. $ 100 000.- staff time, maintenance etc. not included.
The database is said to function technically well. There is a good search function. It is easy to copy text. A standard glossary is established. Projects can easily be identified.

In revising the old database a problem has emerged when it comes to what to do with "old" evaluations. There needs to be a difference between a historical archive and an active database with relevant - not obsolete evaluation reports.

The problem of information overload is also recognised. Staff does not complain about lack of information, but too much information. The database should therefore be designed in the perspective of MIS - a Minimum Information System.
5. RECOMMENDATIONS

"The main usefulness of the database is that it allows one to identify a wide range of UNICEF sponsored evaluations, studies and research in the sectors of institutional concern. The database enables programme and evaluation officers to identify reports of interest to them not only in the region, but worldwide. Thus the EDB can serve as a tool for interregional cross-fertilisation in the areas of project and programme development, implementation and evaluation" (UNICEF staff).

Based on the analysis of users preferences and partner experience and taking into consideration concerns of feasibility and organisational interests, we suggest the following recommendations.

1. The evaluation function in UNICEF should be strengthened.

A strong and effective evaluation system is in the long run a prerequisite for a quality evaluation database. The value of a database will depend on the quality and quantity of information available, and an evaluation system producing such information. A strong evaluation database may contribute to the strengthening of the evaluation function and a partial success illustrates the usefulness of a database. But the best and most long-term strategy for building a database is to reinforce and institutionalise a system and culture of evaluation in the organisation.

2. An Evaluation Database should strengthen key evaluation functions.

The overall purpose of the database should be to strengthen key evaluation function in the organisation. The database should not be perceived as an isolated tool, but be closely linked to efforts for improved evaluation performance. Four relevant functions of evaluation are (see chapter 2.5):

(a) Accountability
Evaluations should show internal and external stakeholders that funds have been spent as intended and desirable results are produced. An evaluation database is needed:

- to show that UNICEF has an effective evaluation system for all levels of the organisation by providing an overview of evaluations and studies carried out (monitoring the evaluation function),
- to document results and achievements (performance measurement).

From such a perspective, it would be difficult for UNICEF as a global organisation to do without some sort of a database or overview of its evaluation function and products. To make it very simple: an organisation like UNICEF needs to be able to provide its stakeholders with a list of studies and evaluations carried out by year, country and region. If a database only served that purpose, its existence would be justified!
(b) Programme Improvement
Evaluation serves not only control functions, but should also support/improve the managerial and decision-making ability. Evaluations should contribute to more informed judgments and decisions. An evaluation database is therefore needed to access information and accumulated experience from countries and regions relevant to a specific theme or programme area. There are currently few other alternative sources of information.

(c) Organisational Learning
UNICEF is primarily a knowledge-based organisation. Evaluations present important lessons learned and provide inputs to research and thematic studies. An evaluation database is needed:
- for easy access to lessons learned for the preparation of thematic studies or research,
- as a repository for the organisation when new evaluations are planned.

(d) Institutional Memory
UNICEF is a large organisation with a rapid turnover of staff. Evaluations contribute to building institutional memory. An evaluation database is therefore needed as a tool to enhance and facilitate access to institutional experience.

To serve all functions – both quality (relevance, accuracy) and quantity (completeness) of information are required. For organisational learning quality is more important than quantity. For accountability, quantity is a requirement. UNICEF should in principle aim for both, but we will suggest giving better completeness and coverage a first priority. To improve quality is a broader and more long-term task.

3. The current database needs to be fundamentally improved.

The current database is not well known in UNICEF. It is not widely used at any level of the organisation. The purpose is said to be unclear. The software considered not user-friendly and up to date. Quantity and quality of information are unsatisfactory. Compliance to guidelines and procedures for maintaining the database is unsatisfactory. Systems and culture of evaluation in UNICEF are not supportive to ensure an effective database. In brief, the original assumptions or problem statement relating to the database (chapter 2.4) have to a large extent been confirmed.

This does not mean that there is no need or demand for an evaluation database - and that UNICEF staff wants to do away with such a tool. A majority would like to see the current database replaced with a new. Or as one of the respondents expressed: "The database is useful, but too heavy to handle in its present form. What we need is something more appealing, friendly and simple."
4. **Top-level management in UNICEF should provide clear direction and active support to the database.**

UNICEF can prepare for and deliver a revised database, if the organisation takes the decision and is willing to make the necessary resources available. A top level decision is required to start the process and later moral and financial support. Management has to send a clear message to COs and ROs that such a database is a priority for the organisation. Most global efforts need strong “political” support. The evaluation database should be considered as one important corporate tool in the broader management of knowledge in UNICEF. Decisions have also to be reflected in Executive Directives and relevant Manuals.

"I think a success will depend on ITD, EPP, Programme Division and Regional Directors reaching a consensus on what information we need, how to organise it and how much information to put into keeping it update".

5. **The purpose of the database should be clarified.**

The current database has laudable and relevant objectives. With current weaknesses in quality and quantity of information all objectives are not realistic and achievable (e.g. an incomplete database cannot be used to monitor the evaluation function). The new database should start with a more limited focus. We suggest to start with improving coverage - making a more complete database. The quality and scope of the database could be gradually expanded and developed.

6. **The scope of the database content should be reduced.**

The scope of the database should be limited to evaluations and evaluative studies of UNICEF assisted programmes - commissioned either by UNICEF or donors. It is an evaluation database and not a general library. The temptation to include any relevant report should be resisted. The only chance to increase coverage and in the long run improve quality is to limit and not expand the task. The Situation Analysis Reports should not be part of the database, but placed in the general UNICEF document repository. The Evaluation Division needs to prepare criteria for what qualifies as evaluations and studies.

The technical feasibility of linking "modules" of other types of reports to the same database should be investigated. The system will then better satisfy the needs of COs and ROs. If a Regional Office or Country Office would like to have their own database for a group of studies, it will enrich the global database. What is suggested is to have one global database and smaller regional and/or country “satellites” using the same software and design. If such an approach is not actively promoted, COs or ROs with large resources may develop their own systems often incompatible with the global database.
7. Quality control should be introduced.

Since the evaluation function is decentralised in UNICEF, it is logical to leave the quality control to the office responsible for the report. It is no option to give up quality control because it is difficult from a principle and practical point of view.

A screening process before reports are entered into the database is also required. Screening is probably a better term than quality control. It means to check that all reports are entered, that only evaluations and studies are entered according to standard criteria, and that procedures and guidelines for updating the database is followed. An assessment of the relevance and quality of content at the point of data entry from central level is most likely not feasible.12

In order to introduce another level of quality control, Regional M&E Focal points should be given a mandate for overseeing and controlling the quality of evaluation and the regional part of the database, in order to:

(a) To ensure that all relevant reports are included,
(b) that only relevant/agreed reports are included,
(c) that guidelines and procedures for maintaining the database is adhered to.

The focal points should be given the responsibility to provide feedback to COs and maintain sufficient “discipline”. EPP should continue its global role of overseeing and managing the entire database. We are not in a position to assess whether such an arrangement is feasible and acceptable. It will have to be negotiated, but the arrangement seems logical and consistent with UNICEF’s organisational structure.

8. The content of the database should be differentiated.

There are several alternatives for what kind of information to include in the database. The current database should contain data on a broad range of issues, but only some fields in the database are regularly filled in. The task of entering data has to be simplified and number of fields reduced. There is a need to provide a generic database structure with sufficient flexibility for gradually increasing complexity and adding new modules for meeting specialised interests.

We present an option between two models:

Model A
The database should contain:
- Basic bibliographic information (title, author, date, type, topic, area, etc.)
- Executive summaries.
- Hyperlink to the full text of the report — not necessarily for all reports, but for selected, important reports.

12 If UNICEF decides that it is important enough and is willing to pay the cost, it will become feasible.
- A search engine for key words in Executive Summary and bibliographic information.

In addition to basic bibliographic information, short summaries are required for most users. Standard format for Executive Summaries should be prepared and made mandatory for all evaluations/studies in UNICEF (as successfully done in UNDP). It should also be a requirement to submit all reports on a diskette or electronically in an appropriate format. It is currently too difficult and time-consuming to get hold of the actual reports.

Time required to enter information according to this model should be minimal – much less than today. One challenge will be to introduce and enforce a standard format for Executive Summaries (findings, conclusions, recommendations, lessons learned, etc. – key phrases to be accessed through the search engine). The other problem will be to get access to electronic files of most reports. None of them are easy. A combination of incentives and pressures are required and other organisations have proved that it can be done.

Model B

This option contains the same as A, but with a broader and longer list of standard information to enter from each report. The Evaluation Information Sheets from UNDP, World Bank and UNFPA (see Annex 5) should be consulted. Such an advanced option is feasible, but not in line with feedback from the users. Their message was clear: make the database more simple and easy to fill in than today.

Other organisations are using the database as a tool in performance measurement and management. This seems premature to introduce in UNICEF. It will require a broader discussion and preparation in the organisation. We would, however, recommend developing the new software with the option of including performance rating.

9. The relationship with other corporate databases should be developed gradually.

It seems premature to recommend linkages between the database and the new programme management system (ProMS) at this point in time. The latter system should eventually have basic information about all evaluations and studies carried out - including cost. A list of all studies carried out in a year should then be automatically produced by the ProMs - and simplify the identification and data entry process. Links between the various databases should also be prepared.

10. The long-term aim should be to make the database available on Internet.

The database should ideally be available on Internet – as part of UNICEF’s Homepage. Like-minded organisations are increasingly adopting a liberal disclosure policy. UNICEF should support this trend. For practical reasons the database could be launched first on the Intranet. When the software is well presented and reliable over a web-interface and the quality and completeness of data have improved, the database could be moved to Internet.

Using Internet will significantly improve easy and fast access to the database and most likely lead to increased use. It will make the database more visible and increase the
benefits and incentives for CO's to update information. Who fails to provide information will also be clearer. RO's and HQ will also play a more active role in controlling compliance and quality.

The database should also be available on CD-ROM for those without or with difficult access to Internet and for external users (if the Intranet option is selected).

11. Country Offices should enter and Regional Offices control data.

There is no viable alternative to country offices entering data about evaluations and studies carried out in their own country. The only arguments against are also low compliance to guidelines and the missing sense for and control of quality reflected in this report. There is no easy way to change such attitudes and practices, but also few better alternatives.

With an electronic database we assume that the technical problems of entering data are or will be overcome. Data can be entered from more than one computer. There is no need for diskettes. All data can be sent electronically. The same computer can be used for both entering information and accessing information. Time required for updating and maintaining the database should be reduced, but the work has to be done.

12. More strict rules for updating the database should be revised and enforced.

A focal person in each Country Office should manage and update the database. Some new and creative mechanisms - are needed to improve motivation (incentives) and compliance (coercion). The updating of the database should remain part of the annual reporting process. ROs report on the M&E function in regional reports and should have a self-interest in playing a role in the management of the database.

The Regional Focal Point should have the authority to follow up and check compliance, prepare a list of COs not following guidelines, return Annual Reports without the relevant Annexes, comment in the regional reports that M&E information is missing from specific countries, etc. It should also be possible for HQ (EPP) to take part in the monitoring of the M&E function at country level.

13. The new database should be promoted and marketed in order to strengthen awareness and knowledge of its usefulness.

The current database is not well known and the new database needs active promotion. The goal should be that all UNICEF staff knows about and can access the evaluation database on their own computer.
14. A training module needs to be developed for maintaining and using the database.

The use and maintenance should be relatively straightforward for any computer literate person, but it is advisable to prepare a short training cum promotion module as part of an ongoing/regular training programme.