Executive Feedback

Title of the evaluation: Independent evaluation of the Health Development Fund (HDF)

Sequence No: 2018/003
Region: ESAR
Office: Zimbabwe
Coverage: Zimbabwe
Evaluation Type: Programme
Year of Report: 2018

OVERALL RATING

• • • - Satisfactory

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

SECTION A: BACKGROUND (weight 5%)

• • • - Satisfactory

The report clearly describes the evaluated object. It does so by presenting a table that provides key information on the Health Development Fund, including its timeframe and geographic coverage, as well as its overall budget per thematic area. Additionally, the report does a nice job of describing the legal and institutional framework related to health in Zimbabwe, as well as the Fund's key beneficiaries and their specific needs. Furthermore, the report clearly outlines the Fund's objectives and does a good job of presenting a reconstructed ToC in both a diagram and narrative format. The report also provides a nice overview of the governance and management structure of the Fund. Implementation and M&E arrangements (which are entrusted to UNICEF and UNFPA), as well as implementing partners per thematic area, are also clearly described. However, while donors are identified, their individual financial contributions are not clearly outlined. Finally, the relative importance of the Fund to UNICEF is not clearly described.

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

• • • - Satisfactory

The report clearly outlines the evaluation objectives and scope, including its timeframe, geographic, and thematic coverage. The Fund's Steering Committee (SC) is implicitly identified as a primary user since the purpose of the evaluation is to "provide the SC with a mid-term, independent (...) assessment of progress made in implementation [and provide] options for adaptive redesign of the Fund". However, specific users and uses are not clearly identified.

SECTION C: EVALUATION METHODOLOGY (weight 15%)
The report identifies the criteria covered by the evaluation and explains that impact is not covered given the formative nature of the evaluation, which does not allow measuring high-level change. The evaluation uses a theory-based approach and contribution analysis but does not clearly explain why this evaluation design is the best suited to this mid-term evaluation. Overall data collection methods and data sources are identified, but the rationale for their selection is not clearly explained. Additionally, the report includes a section on limitations and mitigations strategies, but several of those limitations are not well articulated or do not constitute an actual limitation (i.e., some statements describe the evaluation scope rather than a limitation). Finally, while the report describes general ethical safeguards and confirms that the evaluators obtained ethical clearance for collecting data with human subjects, the ethical approach for collecting data with children is not clearly presented. The evaluation does not reference the UNICEF procedures for Ethical Research Involving Children, and the obligations of evaluators (independence, impartiality, credibility, conflicts of interest, accountability) are not explicitly stated.

SECTION D: EVALUATION FINDINGS (weight 20%)

Satisfactory

The findings provide answers to all evaluation questions, which are reiterated throughout the report. Additionally, the report presents both positive and negative findings, as well as the key factors enabling or hindering effectiveness and sustainability. Furthermore, the evaluation makes reference to the Fund's expected results and reconstructed ToC. The report also clearly discusses positive and negative unintended results under a separate finding. However, while several findings are well substantiated, some lack robust evidence and do not reflect the level of analysis that is required from a good evaluation report (e.g., findings 5, 18, 19, etc.). Furthermore, while the views of community workers and beneficiaries are thoroughly discussed, those of the implementors (e.g., UNICEF, UNFPA staff) and donors are not clearly presented. Finally, the report presents an assessment of the Fund's monitoring system, and the extent to which it has been used for decision making.

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

Highly Satisfactory

The conclusions are linked to the findings and provide a good overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the Fund. Overall, conclusions are analytical and provide some insights on the foreseeable future of the Fund. Finally, the report includes a separate section on lessons learned. Lessons learned are well crafted, contribute to general knowledge, and can be applied to wider contexts.

SECTION F: RECOMMENDATIONS (weight 15%)

Satisfactory
Recommendations logically derive from the evaluation findings and conclusions. Additionally, the recommendations are clearly targeted at specific stakeholder groups. Most, but not all, recommendations include the level of detail that is required to make them actionable. Additionally, while the recommendations are numbered, it is unclear whether or not they are numbered in order of priority. Finally, the report confirms that recommendations were validated by stakeholders during a workshop in Harare.

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

**Satisfactory**

The opening pages include a nice table with key information on the evaluated object, including its timeframe and geographic coverage, as well as the names of the evaluators and that of the commissioning organisation. The opening pages also include an acronym list and a table of contents. Furthermore, the annexes include key elements that add credibility to the report, including the TOR, an evaluation matrix, data collection tools, survey results, information on the evaluators, etc. However, the annexes include elements that are not typically included in an evaluation report, such as the institutional contract and the inception report. Furthermore, some annexes are presented in the report, while others are presented as separate documents included in a ZIP file, which may make it difficult to keep track of the annexes. The sections of the report are logically presented. However, while the report uses numbered findings and paragraphs, sub-sections are not clearly numbered, making it somewhat difficult for the reader to navigate through the report. Additionally, the report is quite lengthy (i.e., 153 pages excluding annexes), which limits its accessibility to stakeholders. Finally, the report has several typos and would benefit from editing.

SECTION H: EVALUATION PRINCIPLES (weight 15%)

**Satisfactory**

The evaluation mostly integrates equity considerations by assessing the extent to which the Fund is reaching vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, mothers and children under five, and more particularly those living in marginalised areas. However, it does not present data disaggregated by ethnicity and disability even though this is requested in the TOR. Although gender is not clearly reflected in the evaluation questions and indicators, the different perspectives of men and women are reflected throughout the report. Additionally, the evaluation presents a gender analysis that provides evidence on the harmful attitudes and behaviours of men and male adolescents as a barrier impeding women and female adolescents to achieve their right to health. Furthermore, the evaluation uses human rights language by framing its analysis around the right to health, but it does not specifically reference a human rights framework. Finally, the report clearly describes the role of the HDF Evaluation Technical Committee and explains the role of other stakeholders in the evaluation design and validation of findings.

SECTION I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (weight 5%)

**Satisfactory**
The executive summary is well written, concise and includes all of the elements that are expected from such a document. Additionally, it presents a nice summary of the findings presented in the report. However, the executive summary presents new information on the intended audience, which is not presented in the body of the report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does the evaluation meet UN SWAP evaluation performance indicators?</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>Meets requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Recommendations for improvement**

| Lessons for managing future evaluations: | The strong participatory approach used throughout the evaluation and the use of an evaluation technical committee composed of members from the Fund's steering committee is a great way to ensure that the evaluation design and findings respond to the needs of the users. This increases ownership of the evaluation and maximises the likeliness that recommendations will be used. However, for future evaluations, the evaluation manager could request that the evaluators create a table explaining how each user intends to use the evaluation findings and recommendations. This could result in even stronger recommendations that are specifically tailored to each user's needs. For future evaluations, the evaluation manager should carefully review each finding and request that evaluators provide additional evidence for those findings that are not well substantiated. In doing so, the evaluation manager could also request that the length of the report be kept to normal standards (i.e., 40-60 pages, excluding annexes). |
|---|---|---|

**Section A**

When evaluating a pooled fund, it is good practice for evaluations to identify the individual financial contributions of specific donors. This could be done using a table format. Additionally, the background could be improved by further describing the relative importance of the Fund to UNICEF. For example, the report could explain how the Fund's objectives align with UNICEF strategic objectives and identify the proportion of UNICEF's pooled funds in relation to its overall financial investment in the health sector.

**Section B**

Simply listing the Steering Committee as a user is insufficient as its members may use the evaluation findings differently. It is good practice for evaluations to list specific users (e.g., donors, UN agencies, governments, etc.) and explain how each group is expected to use the evaluation. Validating these uses with key stakeholders during the inception phase will increase ownership of evaluation findings among its users and maximize the likeliness that recommendations will be implemented.

**Section C**

The report could be further improved by explaining why specific evaluation design, data collection methods, and data sources were selected and are appropriate and how they will help the evaluators answer evaluation questions. Additionally, the evaluators should make sure that all statements included in the limitations section are well articulated and belong in this section. Furthermore, when collecting data with children, it is good practice to include protocols that detail how the evaluators ensured the physical and mental wellbeing of children during FGDs. Evaluators should also make explicit reference to the UNICEF procedures for Ethical Research Involving Children. Finally, GEROS Standards require that the obligations of evaluators (independence, impartiality, credibility, conflicts of interest, accountability) be explicitly stated in evaluation reports.
| Section D | The report could be improved by ensuring that all findings are well substantiated by robust and triangulated data. For example, finding 19 on increased access to health - which is currently substantiated by a series of quotes from beneficiaries - could be stronger if the evaluation were to include quantitative data demonstrating improved access. If no such data is available, this gap should be reiterated in the finding. |
| Section E | This section observes good practice. No further improvement is required. |
| Section F | The recommendations could be improved by providing more details explaining how those should be implemented. Additionally, it is good practice for evaluations to indicate the level of priority (e.g., low, medium, high) of each recommendation to help implementers decide which ones to implement first. |
| Section G | To ensure that the reader has access to important annexes such as the TOR and data collection tools, it would be advisable to add these annexes to the end of the actual report (as opposed to separate documents). If the main report becomes too heavy, the evaluators could consolidate all annexes into a second volume. Annexes that do not add value to the evaluation, such as the institutional contract or inception report, should not be included. Additionally, to ensure that the evaluation remains accessible to all users, it is good practice to keep its length to approximately 60 pages. To achieve a shorter length, evaluators could, for example, remove lengthy quotes or place some graphs as supporting evidence into an annex. Finally, the report should be edited for the occurrence of typos and grammatical errors and sub-sections should be clearly numbered. |
| Section H | The report could be improved by explicitly referencing a human rights framework (e.g., the CRC, CEDAW) and those articles that are relevant to the right to health. Additionally, even though the evaluation inherently addresses GEWE by evaluating a Fund that focuses on the health of women and their newborns, the evaluation questions and indicators should integrate gender equality considerations more explicitly. For more information on how to meaningfully mainstream GEWE into evaluations, please refer to: http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/resources/guide/gender-responsive_evaluation_handbook. Finally, the report could be improved by presenting data disaggregated by vulnerable groups, especially considering that this was requested in the ToR. |
| Section I | The evaluators should ensure that all information presented in the Executive Summary is already included in the body of the report. |