

Evaluation of the Meena Communication Initiative

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Executive Summary

The Meena Communication Initiative (MCI) is a major human rights intervention campaign in South Asia that began in 1991 with support from UNICEF Offices in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal. Its prime **intention** is to bring about a transformation in the heavily disadvantaged situation of girls.

The MCI uses a multi-media Entertainment Education **approach** that involves the use of entertaining stories to convey educational and behavioural development messages to its audiences. In so doing, it seeks to use the drawing power of popular entertainment to influence its audiences' awareness, knowledge, understanding, capacities and practices in relation to the status, rights and treatment of girls. The stories developed for the MCI revolve around the adventures of Meena, a nine year old South Asian girl and members of her family and village community. The communication materials were developed by the UNICEF Regional Office in collaboration with the participating country offices.

The MCI is designed to support and reinforce programme objectives supported by UNICEF and its partners. As such, it has been linked to a number of education, health and social development programmes undertaken by UNICEF partners in government, NGOs, the media and the private sector.

In recent years, the **implementation** was decentralized to countries, as part of measures for further expansion, integration and longer term sustainability. This enabled each country to decide what elements of the MCI it would implement, and how and when this would be done. The country contexts in which these decisions were taken vary widely in terms of prevailing social, economic, political, organizational and religious traditions and practices. This in turn has led to different levels and types of implementation at different times across the region, as each country endeavoured to tailor the initiative to meet its own circumstances. The MCI is thus a complex and variable set of intentions, processes, activities and events that have occurred and evolved over varying lengths of time in a range of different settings. The common element is the shared focus on the rights, understandings, life skills and practices of the girl child.

As the funding for MCI was drawing to a close in end 2003, and efforts were under way to ensure its continuation at country level, it was decided that an evaluation be conducted of the MCI to provide a clear identification of its outcomes, implementation processes and costs, and the potential for its expansion and sustainability.

The **evaluation**, commissioned by UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA) in 2003, focuses on the key outcomes and implementation processes of the MCI in the four countries in which the initiative has been implemented most extensively and for the longest time periods - Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal. Its **objectives** are to -

- describe and assess the key outcomes of the MCI in terms of achieved reach, awareness and knowledge, life skills practices, and perceptions and attitudes to Meena as an entertainment education medium;
- describe and assess the implementation processes in each of the four countries, identifying the key inputs, activities, implementation strategies, efficiency of activities, enabling factors and constraints;
- assess and document the financial costs of key stages of implementation to enable an understanding of the cost of the MCI; and
- identify potential for expansion and sustainability of the MCI.

The evaluation process was decentralized to allow for wide participation at country level. Separate institutions completed the assessments in the four countries within an overall evaluation design, with adaptations suited for country specific situations. This report, prepared by the regional evaluation consultant engaged by UNICEF-ROSA, draws from the findings of the country studies, as well as from an independent document review and interviews with a selection of key stakeholders.

In each country, a mix of quantitative and qualitative **techniques** was used to address the evaluation questions. Quantitative data were gathered from children and adults through household surveys, using structured interview schedules. In Nepal, findings from a survey that had already been conducted in 2002 were used instead. Questionnaires were also used for UNICEF personnel at country and regional levels. Qualitative techniques consisted of document analysis, focus group discussions, interviews, workshops and meetings with people involved in or affected by the MCI.

The findings from the country reports were analyzed to identify commonalities and points of difference, and to draw conclusions and recommendations in the light of insights gained from the documentation review and discussions.

The methodology described above was chosen to provide access to a range of experiences, views and information relating to the implementation processes and short-term outcomes of the MCI in a variety of specific contexts. Judgments about the MCI are made in the report using relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, capacity for expansion, and sustainability as key criteria.

The **limitations** of the evaluation lie in the extent to which observed outcomes may be attributed to the MCI; the retrospective nature of the study; the use of indirect measures of changes in skills and practices; and the extent to which country-specific findings are generalisable across the region.

The evaluation's findings confirm the potential of the MCI, due the great appeal and attractiveness of the communication materials and the channels, to communicate children's rights, particularly girls' rights, to South Asian audiences, and in so doing, to create awareness, promote acquisition of life skills, and encourage change in life skills practices.

The extent to which this potential has been realized varies, with different **levels of awareness, skills and practices** reported across and within the four countries. Contextual factors were found to play a major role in influencing the extent of achievement. Findings on the **sources of knowledge** of the MCI messages among target audiences revealed the significance of parents, villagers/society, teachers, friends and television. **Key factors underpinning non-adoption** of intended practices were found to include poverty, social norms, the role of adults in attitudinal change among children, local customs and beliefs, and security concerns for girls traveling to school. Together these findings highlight the importance further tailoring the means of communication to meet the specific needs and contexts of the target groups, and the need for multidimensional strategic planning that addresses infrastructural and cultural elements as well as those related directly to communication, and the significance of cross-programme planning.

The **efficiency of implementation** varied across the region, depending on factors such as differential access to resources and expertise, availability of training participants, and accessibility of target audiences. The varying experiences highlight the importance of incorporating MCI as tool to achieve clearly articulated results contributing to the outcomes of the respective programmes within a hierarchical results framework.. **Capacity building** was found to have occurred within the MCI, particularly in the areas of research, dissemination and advocacy. This was not as apparent in relation to marketing, management, monitoring and evaluation.

Examples of **multiplication and replication** within the MCI's implementation were demonstrated, and the value of this was confirmed, subject to an assessment of the degree of fit with the newly intended audience's needs and context. The importance of disseminating details of interventions across the region so that each country and implementing agency is aware of the range of options available, was also noted.

Key factors facilitating implementation have been identified in the evaluation as the dedicated commitment of key players within and outside of UNICEF, and the inherent appeal of the Meena product, due in large part to its underpinning research and development processes. Supporting key players and

establishing mechanisms to ensure continuing product appeal will be essential components of future operations.

Constraining factors were identified as gaps in UNICEF organizational awareness and application of the MCI, shortage of funds, limits on availability of materials, non-availability of materials in some local languages, and local security, transport and infrastructure problems. An extension of internal marketing, re-examination of the means available within the regional and country offices to record and disseminate the details and experiences of the initiative, and attention to human and infrastructure resource funding in ongoing strategic planning are recommended as a response to these.

While difficulties were experienced in determining the actual **costs** of the MCI, materials production emerged as a major component. The relative importance of this aspect might be expected to diminish in future years, in view of the embedding of initial research and development investment expenditure and the adoption of more efficient technologies.

Scope exists for **further expansion** of the MCI, given its positive outcomes, its un-reached or partially reached audiences, and newly emerging issues relating to girls' rights. The further development of partnerships should play an important role in this, subject to consideration of a number of issues. These include retaining the key Meena messages and intentions, maintaining artistic and production standards, and ensuring that the initiative addresses the specific needs, characteristics and contexts of its various target groups.

Key lessons learnt from the MCI implementation stress the importance of advocates, customising implementation for specific target audiences, simultaneous action on contextual enabling factors, and strategic planning to ensure that Meena activities are part of an overall set of integrated and ongoing strategies and programmes. An organizational **model** involving the establishment of one or more institutions, connected to but largely operating outside of UNICEF, with NGOs playing a central role could be an option for future of MCI.

The report includes a number of **recommendations**, focusing on strategic planning, attention to enabling factors, internal and external marketing, cross-programme implementation, participatory decision making, ongoing evaluation, capacity development, support of key personnel, cost reporting, and adoption of a model for promoting sustainability. **Key recommendations** include –

- That in the context of evolving results based management in UNICEF, that future MCI interventions be undertaken within a results frame work , to enable clear identification of expected results and their contribution to the programme or project outcomes that MCI supports.

This process needs to consider identified target audiences and their specific needs; articulation of intended awareness and practice outcomes, and contributing outputs for each audience; selection of appropriate means of communication in terms of audience access, capacity to use and receptivity; and assessment of possible intervention overlaps, disjunctions and complementarities.

- That implementation planning for the MCI be of a multidimensional strategic nature that addresses infrastructural and cultural elements as well as those related directly to communication.
- That internal and external marketing of the MCI be extended and intensified among UNICEF, government department and NGO personnel, to heighten awareness of how Meena materials and messages can be used as an integral and effective tool within and across their various programmes.
- That guidelines on implementation procedures, monitoring of results and costs similar to those that have been established for research and development of the Meena materials, be established, accompanied by specific targets, timelines, and points of responsibility and accountability within a strategic planning framework.
- That ongoing evaluation be built into MCI implementation, to enable continuing assessment of the appeal of the Meena series to its intended audiences, closer monitoring of outcomes, and refinement of processes during implementation where warranted.
- That for future implementation of MCI, consider the adoption of a model where the country offices are supported by two national foundations empowered to use and produce Meena communication materials through research guided by agreed ethical and artistic standards.

Evaluation of the Meena Communication Initiative

Chapter 1 Introduction

The Meena Communication Initiative in South Asia

The Meena Communication Initiative (MCI) has developed into a major human rights intervention campaign in South Asia since its commencement in 1991 with support from UNICEF Offices in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal. It involves the use of a multi-media Entertainment Education approach to communicate children's rights to its South Asian audiences, primarily to bring about a transformation in the heavily disadvantaged situation of girls. Development of the MCI has been enabled by substantial funding support from the Government of Norway as well as grants from donors in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Finland and the United States.

As part of the ongoing development of the MCI, and considering the closure of funding, a decision was made by the Regional Director of UNICEF South Asia to decentralize its implementation to country level, in order to promote its further expansion, integration and longer term sustainability. Accordingly, it was decided that an evaluation be conducted of the MCI to provide a clear identification of its outcomes, implementation processes and costs, and the potential for its expansion and sustainability. In 2003, UNICEF ROSA commissioned an evaluation of the MCI in South Asia, focusing on its implementation in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal, the four countries in which the initiative has been implemented most extensively and for the longest time periods.

This document provides a report on the evaluation. The report begins with the following overview of the MCI in terms of its history and background, aims and objectives, key features, phases of development, and previous assessments.

1.1.1 History and background of the MCI

The ultimate aim of all UNICEF-supported interventions is the realization of the rights of children and women, as articulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.¹ In working towards this aim, UNICEF offices in South Asia have played a leading advocacy role since 1986 in highlighting the importance of addressing the needs of the girl child.² Allied to this, the 1990s were declared the Decade of the Girl Child by the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in order to address discrimination against girls in the region and promote their potential to participate in development. In

South Asian countries, and especially in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan, female children face differential treatment in all aspects of their lives. Deep-rooted traditional beliefs and practices threaten the protection as well as survival of girls in many instances.

The MCI was designed to address the deprived situation of girl children and to bring about a transformation in their situation in the South Asian region. In so doing, it was designed to support and reinforce on-going and future programme activities supported by UNICEF and its partners. As such, it has been linked to education, health and social development programmes undertaken by UNICEF partners in government, NGOs, the media and the private sector.

1.1.2 Aims, objectives and approach of the MCI

The overall goal of the MCI is to promote the Rights of the Child and support their implementation and realization, with special focus on female children in South Asia, in order to improve their status and develop their potential by influencing and supporting the forces of social and behavioural development/behavioural change in the region.

The objectives have been identified ³ in terms of researching, producing and disseminating regional communication packages on the Rights of the Child in order to:

- i. Create awareness and advocate for the reduction of existing disparities in the status and treatment of girls.
- ii. Support social mobilization processes designed to realize the potential of female children and to foster their participation in development.
- iii. Produce a dynamic role model for girls which will assist in their acquisition of psycho-social life skills which are essential for empowerment.
- iv. Provide a model for improved gender relationships, beginning at an early age.
- v. Communicate information regarding the survival, protection and development of children, including specific messages on education, health, gender equity and freedom from exploitation and abuse.
- vi. Sustain all the above objectives and emerge as an independent, self-financed entity or “Meena Centre” in the future by creating stronger and meaningful partnerships with corporate donors/private sectors, NGOs and broadcast media.

To achieve these aims and objectives, the MCI uses a multi-media Entertainment Education approach. This involves the use of entertaining stories to convey educational and behavioural development messages to its audiences. In so doing, it seeks to use the drawing power of popular entertainment to

influence its audiences' awareness, knowledge, understanding, capacities and practices in relation to the status, rights and treatment of girls. To achieve this, the approach was designed to be provocative as well as informative in order 'to generate discussion and participation. It must motivate through entertaining stories which are based on careful research into traditional and modern values and ... address the life skills and enabling environment factors which are crucial for behaviour development programming' 4.

1.1.3 The MCI stories

The stories developed for the MCI revolve around the adventures of Meena, a nine year old South Asian girl, her brother Raju, her pet parrot Mithu, and members of her family and village community. Meena is presented in the stories not as a victim requiring assistance and protection, but as a role model in actively promoting change in relation to the rights of children, and particularly of girls. The stories focus on the development of psycho-social life skills in the girl child and her family to foster positive practices to enhance her growth and development. Messages conveyed in the stories cover issues such as education, health, gender equity and freedom from exploitation and abuse. By the end of 2003, 24 stories had been produced, with a further eight to be released in 2004. The key messages of each of these are indicated below.

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------------------|--|
| 1. | <i>Count Your Chickens</i> | Meena's dream of going to school comes true |
| 2. | <i>Dividing the Mango</i> | Raju finds out what it is to like to be Meena for a day |
| 3. | <i>Will Meena Leave School?</i> | Meena finds a way to increase the family's income |
| 4. | <i>Who's Afraid of the Bully</i> | Meena and friends get together to solve the problem of bullies |
| 5. | <i>Saving a Life</i> | Meena saves baby Rani when she has diarrhoea |
| 6. | <i>Meena's Three Wishes</i> | Meena tackles the issues of hygiene and sanitation |
| 7. | <i>Say No to Dowry</i> | Meena and her family question the practice of dowry |
| 8. | <i>Too Young to Marry</i> | Can Meena help her cousin who is being married before the legal age? |
| 9. | <i>Take Care of Girls</i> | Girls and boys have an equal right to health care |
| 10. | <i>I Love School</i> | A good teacher makes all the difference |
| 11. | <i>It's Got to Be a Boy!</i> | Meena teaches her uncle to welcome the birth of girls and boys equally |
| 12. | <i>Meena in the City</i> | Meena experiences the life of a domestic child worker |
| 13. | <i>AIDS: A Girl's Story</i> | Meena helps challenge stigma and some myths about HIV/AIDS |

14.	<i>Learning to Love</i>	Children need stimulation, care and play from an early age and the importance of fathers' involvement in their development
15.	<i>Strangers in the Village</i>	Coping with differences and peace building (in conflict situations)
16.	<i>Reaching Out</i>	Community care and support for people living with HIV and AIDS
17.	<i>Meena and Her Friend</i>	Iodine deficiency disorders and support for children suffering from IDD
18.	<i>It Could Happen to Anyone</i>	Safe environment - keeping children safe from accidents including road accidents among adolescents
19.	<i>The Girls Came Back</i>	Trafficking and sexual exploitation of girls
20.	<i>When Meena was Born</i>	Exclusive breastfeeding and complementary feeding after six months along with breast milk
21.	<i>When Meena was a little Girl</i>	Low birth weight among infants and its prevention
22.	<i>Seeing in the Dark</i>	Vitamin A deficiency and prevention
23.	<i>Health in your Hands</i>	The importance of hand washing to be healthy
24.	<i>Safe from Worms</i>	Worm infestation and prevention
25.	<i>Fair Play for Girls</i>	Girls' right to play and recreation
26.	<i>Baby Rani's Four Visits</i>	The importance of EPI (immunization)
27.	<i>We Love Books!</i>	The need for learning materials for quality of education
28.	<i>Learning with Meena</i>	The importance of educating girls
29.	<i>School First, Marriage Later</i>	Prevention of early marriage and retention of older girls in school
30.	<i>Teacher Helps to Learn</i>	Quality of education in class room situations
31.	<i>Let's Go to School Together</i>	Retention of girls in school (after primary)
32.	<i>Learning Can be Fun</i>	Need for quality education

The Meena stories have been developed using comprehensive formative research conducted in various locations in South Asia. The aim of this research is to ensure that the final products are comprehensible, relevant, credible, culturally sensitive, acceptable and effective for the audiences for which they are intended.

The formative research involves a number of stages⁵. First, the particular issue for an episode is explored in focus group discussions with children and parents across the region. The issue itself is previously identified in a regional workshop in the light of UNICEF priorities. The focus group discussions are used to validate the issue at community level; to explore the local understanding of the issue and related attitudes, beliefs and values; and to identify various dimensions of the issue and possible solutions. This process enables girls and boys and their parents to discuss the issue from their own perspectives. They talk about their aspirations, the constraints that they face, and what they envisage as possible ways in which families and communities could make children's rights a reality. The findings from this stage are then used to develop draft story lines.

Secondly, the draft story lines are reviewed by technical experts. They are then reviewed by children and parents in the field to check their entertainment value, comprehension and credibility. This review provides the basis for script modification and further field testing.

Thirdly, the visual representation of the story is tested in the field.

The field testing at each stage involves children and parents from each of the main target countries, with the samples being selected to represent a range of socio-economic groups from both rural and urban settings. Over 10 thousand children across South Asia have participated in this process of shaping the vision and stories of the Meena series.⁶

The Meena stories are presented through a variety of media, involving story books, two radio series (produced in collaboration with BBC World Service), posters, flip charts, animated videos and discussion guides. Materials such as the discussion guides reinforce the concept of empowerment by exploring how the issues raised in the stories relate to the audiences' real lives, and what actions they can take to address these concerns. The core materials are in five languages (English, Bangla, Hindi, Nepali and Urdu). These have been translated/dubbed in 17 South Asian languages as well as in Arabic, some South East Asian languages and some European languages. The first episode (*Count your Chickens*) has been dubbed into over 30 languages. Based on the regional packages, national adaptations and materials development have taken place in most of the countries.

1.1.4 Dissemination strategy for the MCI

The dissemination strategy for the MCI is based on a communication model developed by Neill McKee, a former UNICEF Communication Officer based in Bangladesh. The model contains three elements – advocacy, social mobilization and programme communication.

At the advocacy level, UNICEF, through Meena and other initiatives, highlights the duties and obligations that the State carries in having ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The intention here is to create and sustain commitment among political and social leaders. Examples of advocacy activities that have been undertaken include lobbying heads of state, ministers and parliamentarians to influence laws that have negative effects on girl children's development, and to promote and enhance policies that encourage girls' participation and empowerment; and integrating Meena into regional and global events such as the SAARC Meena Day, Girl Child Week, World AIDS Day and International Women's Day.

Advocacy is combined with social mobilization processes, through which the Meena initiative becomes a catalyst for bringing together partners in the government, NGO, media and private sectors. Such alliances, at national and regional levels, can work to create an enabling environment – with policy and legislation, strengthened social services and legal systems, and more positive cultural and media influences – all serving to promote the realization of children's rights.⁷

The third element, programme communication, involves capacity building and developing communication strategies for specified audiences, with focused community level messages and materials. A fundamental component of this is continuing community participation through the formative research process outlined earlier in section 1.1.3.

1.1.5 Phases of the MCI

The MCI can be considered as having been implemented in a four phases, focusing on operationalization of the project in Phase One, major materials production in Phase Two, broad scale implementation and initial attention to long-term sustainability in Phase Three, and establishment of largely self supporting foundations in Phase Four. The first three phases have been made possible by donor funding, primarily from the Government of Norway, and also from UK NatCom, Netherlands NatCom, Finland NatCom and US NatCom. The Country Offices also contributed significantly..

Phase One (1991-1992) entailed the operationalization of the project, including identification of creative talents and training of researchers in the region, regional consultation on themes and research methods,

and extensive pre testing of concepts, characters and background designs in four countries with girls, boys, women and men in urban and rural settings.

Episode 1 (*Count Your Chickens*) was produced as a pilot film episode, based on a draft script developed by Rachel Carnegie, a consultant engaged in 1991 to take the Meena concept forward. Designs were developed by Ram Mohan, a Bombay-based animator and a group of South Asian artists. Pre-testing was then undertaken, with the results being reviewed in January 1992 at the first regional Meena workshop in Kathmandu, and subsequently used to finalise the designs and scripts. The pilot episode was then produced by the Hanna-Barbera studios in Manila, incorporating some capacity building in the form of work training for four South Asian artists. The video was produced in English and four South Asian languages, with support materials (comic book, poster, facilitator guidelines) also prepared in the five languages. Field testing of the video and support materials was conducted in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal by Dr Mira Aghi in 1992, involving over 2,500 respondents. During this period, Dr Aghi also trained national research groups in qualitative research methods.

Following positive outcomes of the field testing, the video was shown on television in Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan in December 1992.

Phase Two (1993-1997) involved the production of 12 more packages and related support materials. As with the pilot episode and materials, these were based on an extensive platform of research and development activities. These activities were conceptualised by the project team in Phase Two as a sequenced process involving 28 steps⁸. The project team comprised Rachel Carnegie (scriptwriter and creative director), Dr Mira Aghi (research director), Ram Mohan (animation director) and Nuzhat Shahzadi (script co-writer and implementation coordinator for Bangladesh).

Regional workshops in Dhaka (January 1993), Bhurban (June 1993), Delhi (November 1993), Bombay (May 1994) and Kathmandu (September 1994) were used to review field testing results and to plan production. In this phase, two radio series were also produced jointly with the BBC World Service and broadcast through that Service in the region.

As Phase Two progressed, increasing attention was given in UNICEF to the long-term maintenance and sustainability of the MCI. By 1995, the specific vision being articulated was that of institutionalizing Meena through partnerships with the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and other NGOs. To test this vision, Meena was moved to BRAC as a pilot project, under the management of Ms Nuzhat Shahzadi, with the intention of using BRAC's channels to get Meena out to communities and help

them develop ownership of the MCI. The project was judged to have ‘operated successfully but as the mode of operation was not well defined, the project was finally returned to UNICEF 18 months later’⁹.

Implementation of the MCI continued in Phase Two, supported in each country by donor funding primarily from the Government of Norway. The nature and extent of implementation varied across the four initiating countries during this time. In India, Phase Two was marked by detailed formative research and materials development, as a precursor to distribution of the Meena episodes. In Nepal, some small scale activities were undertaken with NGO partners and a few episodes were broadcast on television. In Pakistan, the MCI was gradually introduced into UNICEF programmes in education, health and girl child/child rights promotion. The most extensive implementation occurred in Bangladesh, involving a mass mobilization campaign of television, cinema and mobile film unit screenings, radio broadcasts, billboards and distribution of Meena comic books to schools. Screenings by mobile film units in rural and urban areas are estimated to have reached more than 3 million people.

As part of the implementation process across and within the countries, a Regional Meena Coordinator was hired, with the position being based in the UNICEF Regional Office in Kathmandu. Prior to this, the MCI had been managed and coordinated by the UNICEF Bangladesh Office.

Phase Three (1998 onwards) has focused on

- i. broad scale implementation of the MCI in the South Asia region, and
- ii. the project’s long term sustainability.

In Bangladesh, the broad scale implementation focus meant an extension of existing mass distribution through, for example, country-wide activities for a national Meena Day, the development and national screening of repackaged Meena episodes incorporating puppets and Bangladeshi girls, and continuation of the very popular mobile unit screenings. More targeted interventions were also initiated in primary schools and non-formal learning centers. In India, the Meena episodes were launched on national television, and a series of activities was launched at community level involving use of film and books, and training of trainers, to initiate and facilitate discussion; training of youth co-ordinators to promote local dissemination of stories; and integration of Meena in fairs and festivals across the country. In Nepal, this phase saw the launch of a nation-wide social mobilization campaign involving activities such as the production and screening on national television of a combined village documentary/Meena episodes series, and the provision of Meena slides to local cinemas. A particular focus has also been placed on district and village level implementation involving partnerships with NGOs, human rights groups and community organizations. In Pakistan, Phase Three began with a full scale mass media

launch on television, radio, closed circuit television, newspapers and special events across the country. Particular emphasis has also been placed on widespread dissemination through partnerships with bodies such as the Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, Family Planning Association and the Ministry of Health.

In each of the four countries, Phase Three has seen the development of dissemination plans, including the planning of activities in collaboration with partners in NGOs, government and the private sector. In 2003, each of the country offices was asked to plan strategies to integrate Meena into their country programmes. Funding was provided to facilitate the incorporation of Meena into their formal and non-formal education systems. This was used, for example, in Nepal to supply materials to children in the Quick Impact and Out of School Programmes. Further details of implementation in each country are provided in section 1.1.6 of this report.

Implementation has also continued on a regional or cross-country basis in Phase Three. Thus, in 1998, Meena was appointed as the official ambassador of the International Children's Day of Broadcast. A Meena website was established in 1998 and became the frontispiece of UNICEF's global website for an extended period during that year. In 2001, UNICEF appointed Meena as the spokesperson for children's rights at the Global Movement for Children initiative.

By the end of 2003, a further 11 packages (booklet, video and posters) had been produced on regional priorities, bringing the total number to 24. Discussion guides were included in most of these additional packages. The themes for the packages included domestic child labour (*Meena in the City*), early childhood care and development (*Learning to Love*), children in conflict situations (*Strangers in the Village*) and HIV/AIDS (*Reaching Out*). Further packages were in the planning stages, with the next eight due to be released in 2004. Seven of the eight are to be presented as one-minute film/video spots, accompanied by 12-page comic books, posters and discussion guides.

Commercial publishing has also begun in Bangladesh and India during this phase. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with the Turner Cartoon Network that will see the full series of Meena films being shown across Asia. A partnership with the Asian Cricket Corporation is being negotiated with a view to providing further exposure to girls' education by use of a *Fair Play for Girls* campaign. The further expansion of commercial publishing in other participating countries, a continuing creation of partnerships with international media companies and broadcast networks, the development of merchandizing and other self-sustaining mechanisms, and the strengthening of partnerships with corporate donors/private sectors and NGOs, are also envisaged.

The second focus of Phase Three has been the MCI's long term sustainability, building upon the discussions and vision initiated during the preceding phase. In February 2001, Ms Shahzadi was employed by UNICEF ROSA, to facilitate the institutionalization of Meena before the cessation of the donor funding at the end of 2003. In August 2001, a meeting in Bangkok of personnel from all of the UNICEF country offices and other senior staff endorsed the notion of establishing a separate Center that would manage the continuing implementation and development of Meena. In turn, a range of NGOs indicated their support for the notion. Meena was seen as remaining 'an ally in UNICEF programming', with UNICEF in turn continuing 'its guiding and catalytic roles for the long term viability of Meena. ... Multi-lateral, bi-lateral and other private sector partnerships will be sought for financial sustainability. Revenue generation through merchandising and commercialization of Meena products/educational materials will contribute to the financial sustainability of the foundation as well' ¹⁰. A meeting was then held of personnel from the NGOs, the country UNICEF offices and a regional chain store specializing in the sale of books and other materials for children to develop preliminary operational plans.

2002 saw changes in UNICEF-ROSA personnel and a review of priorities and planning. The Regional Director of UNICEF –ROSA sought to ensure sustainability of Meena while maximizing its potential and releasing its energies by strengthening the decentralisation to countries. Bi-lateral meetings were held in March/April 2002 with NGO and corporate partners; UNICEF officers and country representatives in Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan; the Regional and Deputy Regional Directors of UNICEF-ROSA; and NYHQ, regarding the sustainability of the MCI beyond the current donor funding period. It was reported that 'there was a consensus among all parties involved regarding the creation of a separate entity for Meena by forging meaningful partnerships with NGOs, Corporate and Government partners, and with support from UNICEF.' ¹¹

In May 2002, a meeting of a number of partners and UNICEF Regional and country Officers in Dhaka recommended that a regional Meena Centre be established, with participating countries being able to set up national Meena Centres based on needs. In October 2002, a Task Force was established under the leadership of Morten Giersing, UNICEF Representative in Bangladesh, to examine the future of Meena. This led to the endorsement of national institutions as the first stage vehicle for Meena institutionalization, with a regional center being seen as a possible next stage future development. The national institutions were envisaged as each having a range of creative, research and management staff that could take Meena forward in each country.

The management and coordination of the MCI has continued to be provided from the Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA) in Kathmandu during Phase Three. As part of this, ROSA manages the regional

research and development process and facilitation of stakeholder links. Simultaneously, Meena activities and national materials development have been carried out at country levels, with ROSA providing technical inputs and capacity building support on request. ROSA also coordinates regional exchange of experiences and materials, and takes a lead in consulting and planning for the MCI's sustainability.

Phase Four will emerge with the establishment of largely self supporting mechanisms that can manage Meena operations, including dissemination of messages and tools and training activities as well as undertaking research and development for new materials. These may be on a national and/or regional basis. The importance and urgency of establishing such mechanisms has been underscored by the cessation of significant amounts of external funding at the end of 2003. In order to gain political commitment of South Asian governments to the promotion of girls' education, some plans are underway to host an interactive website and for a regional launch of Meena educational packages.

1.1.6 The MCI in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan

The development and implementation of the MCI has largely occurred in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal. Highlights of implementation in each of these countries are outlined below, within the framework of the four phases described in the preceding section.

Bangladesh

The UNICEF-Bangladesh Country Office played a major role in Phases One and Two of the MCI with its management of the regional coordination role from 1991 to 1995. Implementation of the MCI in Bangladesh began in December 1992 with the showing of the first episode on television in Dhaka. This signaled the start of an intensive implementation period to 1996, in which partnerships were developed with government, NGOs, mass media and the private sector as part of a mass mobilization strategy. This led to a number of specific dissemination and advocacy activities, many of which have continued and been further developed beyond the initial 1992-96 development period. Thus, for example,

- Meena films were screened repeatedly on Bangladesh Television (BTV), with this process continuing to the present, incorporating newly developed episodes dubbed into Bangla. In collaboration with UNICEF, BTV also produced two documentaries on the MCI. In 1993-94, Bangladesh Airlines included Meena videos in their in-flight entertainment programme.
- In 1993, the Department of Mass Communication began showing Meena films on large screens in rural and urban areas through mobile film units, reaching an estimated audience since then of over three million people.

- Billboards, wall paintings and traffic island decorations in urban areas have featured Meena, the first billboard presentation being introduced in 1993. Meena also appears on rickshaws, enabled by the mass production of Meena plates, and three wheeler taxis.
- One million comic books of the first Meena episode were printed in 1993 by the UNICEF Education Section for distribution to primary schools, together with guidelines for head teachers.
- In 1993, Shishu (Children's) Academies in urban centers began hosting Meena events such as art and story writing competitions, Children's Fair activities (folk singing, discussions, film shows).
- In 1993, the Scouts and Guides Movement, supported by UNICEF's Health Section, developed a manual featuring Meena and her family to create awareness of diarrhoea management and ORT.
- UNICEF and the BBC World Service produced the first Meena radio series, broadcasting this in 1994.

A critically important aspect of implementation of the MCI in Bangladesh has been the involvement of NGOs in the various research, development and dissemination activities. The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) has been a continuing major partner, commencing with its use of Meena materials in its non-formal schools in the early 1990s. As outlined in Section 1.1.5, Meena operated within BRAC for 18 months as a pilot project in 1995-96, as an initial testing of sustainability potential.

Phase Three of the MCI saw a change in emphasis in the UNICEF Bangladesh Country Office towards more targeted interventions. These occurred primarily through two major projects being undertaken by the Education Section. Thus,

- The MCI has been integrated into the IDEAL (Intensive District Approach to Education for All) project, leading to the production of a range of materials being used to introduce gender issues into schools and to promote a more child/girl-friendly learning environment. In 2003, the NCTB approved 10 Meena story books (translated into Bangla) for distribution to all primary schools in selected IDEAL districts. Also in 2003, the IDEAL project has featured the organization of interactive forum theatre at community level focusing on physical growth and development of children (0 – 5 years) and improvement of girls' education.
- Bulk copies of new Meena materials have been distributed to about 1,000 non-formal learning centers that have been established in Dhaka and Chittagong to provide flexible education for

urban working children (the Basic Education for Hard-to-Reach Urban Working Children project, run by UNICEF in collaboration with a number of NGOs).

From August 2000 to February 2003, BRAC was contracted by UNICEF to print, publish, market and distribute Meena materials. This involved distribution to schools and learning centers under the IDEAL and Basic Education for Hard-to-Reach Urban Working Children projects, as well as marketing five Meena comic books through its Aarong outlet.

Other developments during Phase Three include -

- Celebration of national Meena Day, beginning with a re-launch of Meena as part of Child Rights Week in 1998. The Meena Days have included a wide variety of activities including, for example, rallies with banners and decorated rickshaws and trucks, discussions and film screenings; story writing competitions; advocacy meetings and press briefings; street drama; children's fairs; and public debates.
- Broadcasting of a second UNICEF-BBC World Service radio series in four languages across the region in 1998, with this being rebroadcast twice weekly in Bangladesh on national radio in the same year.
- Dubbing of four Meena episodes in Bangla in 1999 by UNICEF for television broadcasting.
- Training in 2000 of two instructors from each of the 54 Primary Teachers Training Institutes on how to incorporate the Meena videos in teacher training courses.
- Inclusion of the Meena stories in formal and non-formal primary school curricula, textbooks and materials, in consultation and collaboration with the Division of Primary and Mass education, the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) and a range of NGOs.
- Incorporation of Meena puppets and involvement of girls from different parts of the country in eight repackaged Meena episodes in order to introduce the key issues and to encourage children to practice the MCI messages in their own lives. The repackaged episodes also include Bangladeshi games, songs and traditions.
- Production by the Bangladesh Country Office of six television and six radio Meena spots, based on the existing episodes, for prime time release.

- Organisation by the Shishu Academies in 2003 of workshops to develop Meena stories and rhymes on integrated early childhood development, producing three Meena stories and one rhyme book.
- Development of seven scripts for Interactive Forum Theatre, with this program being implemented in 16 districts beginning in December 2003.

In late 2003, the Bangladesh Country Office was reported to be developing additional country-specific storybooks, conversation charts for teachers, a 30-minute audiocassette with companion booklet, and a photo novella with pictures and story for primary school teachers. Planning of supplements to existing Bangla versions of videos, BBC radio tapes and print materials was also reported as being undertaken in response to the success of the existing communication package.

Thus there has been extensive and longstanding implementation of the MCI in Bangladesh, as outlined above, and the strong history of collaboration with government, NGO and other institutional partnerships within that experience, suggest that Bangladesh is in a strong position to support the MCI into a sustainable future.

India

The UNICEF-India Country Office (ICO) played an active role in the initial conceptualization, naming, design, research, production and strategic planning aspects of the MCI. In so doing, it placed particular emphasis on promoting government, NGO, media and other institutional partnerships as a means of encouraging widespread use and ownership of the MCI messages and materials at community level. In turn, it has supported the UNICEF Field Offices in exploring such partnerships as a means of promoting decentralized management and innovation at State level in India.

In Phases One and Two, the activities in India focused on formative research and development of the concept and materials. Key elements of this included -

- Regional workshops to identify topics and themes for Meena films, followed by pre-testing in several states (involving Field Officers, NGOs, government partners and subject specialists).
- Launching of the first Meena film in India in 1993 on the SAARC Day of the Girl Child.
- Dubbing of the first episode into 10 local languages, creating comic books in two languages, and developing material for use on radio in 1993.
- Further dubbing of four films into two languages.

- Organizing a workshop in 1996 in collaboration with the Directorate of Women and Child Development and All India Radio, which led to the adaptation of the Meena radio series in a range of Indian languages, subsequently broadcast on 140 radio stations.

The ICO's decision to focus on community highlighted the need to encourage discussions of the issues raised by Meena as a key implementation strategy. To promote this aspect, the ICO decided to focus on three main channels of communication –

- Primary schools;
- Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Nehru Yuvak Kendras and Gram Panchayats; and
- NGOs.

From 1996 onwards, steps were taken to encourage ownership of the MCI among partners. These led to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting's Directorate of Field Publicity (DFP) adopting and using Meena materials without the need for ongoing support from UNICEF. Negotiations with the National Council for Education, Research and Training (NCERT) and the Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET) also led to the use of Meena films on educational television.

Phase Three, from 1998 onwards, saw the scaling up of the MCI in India. The period from 1998 to 2000 included activities such as -

- Development and launching of the Meena Talk Show on the state television network, Doordarshan, in children's prime time viewing slots. This involved the screening of Meena films accompanied by discussion among children, parents, counsellors and subject experts on the issues raised. The show was first screened from September 1998 to January 1999, and then again a year later.
- Use of Meena films and story books by the government Department of Field Publicity to initiate discussion at community level in 31 states and territories.
- Conducting of six Meena workshops for about 200 trainers from Anganwadi Workers Training Centres (operating within the Integrated Child Development Services network) in 11 states in 1999, leading in turn to the training of 18,000 Anganwadi Workers to facilitate community discussions on girl child issues.
- Meena campaigns in several states in 1998-99, involving portrayal of Meena stories by performing troupes, under the auspices of the Song and Drama Division of the Ministry of Information.

- Incorporation of the MCI into several school systems, as a first step to intended nation-wide integration into school curriculum and teacher training.
- Training of youth co-ordinators working in the nation-wide network of youth clubs operated by Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, Ministry of Youth Affairs. This has been undertaken to promote dissemination of Meena stories at the community level among young people.
- Workshops for NGOs in eight states, to share ideas and information relating to the MCI, and to plan for special events such as Meena Day and Girl Child Week.
- Integration of Meena in fairs and festivals throughout the country, in collaboration with NGOs and local community groups.

These national or multi-state activities have been accompanied by wide variety of other activities organized at individual state levels. Examples include the Meena Muppet Road Show in Bihar; a symposium of poets, writers and journalists to launch the Meena Girl Child Week in Gujarat; the formation of Meena Clubs and Bal Panchayats (child village councils) in Madhya Pradesh; and the showing of Meena films to parents in West Bengal to convince them to allow their daughters to go to school.

From 2001 onwards, the MCI focus in India has been on enhancing the visibility of Meena and promoting the MCI's sustainability. Advocacy activities have featured strongly in this period, including, for example, interaction with the National Human Rights Commission Chairman and members, and workshops for police officials, the civil service training authority, and education professionals in Uttar Pradesh, and for NGOs working on gender issues in Rajasthan. Other activities have included -

- Signing of a partnership agreement in 2002 with the Macmillan publishing company to print, market and distribute Meena print materials.
- Premiering of the Meena film on child labour at the Golden Elephant Children's Film Festival in collaboration with the Children's Film Society of India, a unit of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- Efforts to help state governments to integrate Meena into their education programmes.
- Creation of a film on the Meena Club initiative in Orissa.

The Indian experience of the MCI illustrates the complexity of seeking to promote changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes and practices in a country with such a large and diverse population. As the preceding

description reveals, many of the MCI interventions have been undertaken in partnership with major government departments, NGOs and other institutions. Such arrangements have served to highlight the critical importance of working partnerships, as a means of enabling widespread penetration of the MCI materials and messages at community level, promoting a spread of ownership, and laying the basis for decentralized management and implementation.

Nepal

Along with the Offices in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, UNICEF Nepal has been involved in the development of the MCI from its inception. In particular, it has participated in the research and development processes for the animated series and other materials. Some of the designs for the series were also produced by a Nepali animation studio.

In Phases One and Two of the MCI, activities in Nepal were relatively limited, comprising small scale activities with NGO partners plus the broadcasting of a few Meena episodes by Nepal Television. The World Service radio series was broadcast by the BBC in 1997, and has since been re-broadcast by national and local stations.

Phase Three began with the launching of a nationwide social mobilization campaign for the MCI on SAARC Meena Day, 24 September 1998. Subsequent sub-regional launches covered 36 of the country's 75 administrative districts by the end of that year. The mass media aspects of the campaign included -

- Extensive coverage of the 1998 Meena launch, and ongoing publication of related stories and articles in national and local newspapers.
- Production of a television series entitled 'Meena in our Villages', combining a documentary of village life and various Meena episodes. This series was subsequently broadcast at prime time on national television, and also on some local cable channels.
- Re-broadcasting of the UNICEF/BBC radio series through FM channels, Radio Sagarmatha and Radio Kantipur. Meena public service announcements continued to be broadcast on a regular basis by Radio Nepal for nearly 18 months after the major launch.
- Provision of Meena slides to local cinema halls for screening as a public service announcement.
- The appointment of Meena as a goodwill ambassador and spokesperson for the girl child at the South Asian Federation Games in Kathmandu in 1999. The opening ceremony included a

number of activities featuring Meena, and attracted an estimated television audience of 250 million people in South Asia.

Given the relative isolation of people in the mountain areas of Nepal, a major emphasis has been placed on outreach through organisations at the community level. To service this type of delivery, a package of Meena materials, modified to provide a closer fit to the Nepali context, was developed for partner agencies. The package included episodes on video tapes, the radio series on audio tapes, posters, stickers, badges and a user's guide.

The focus on local, decentralized implementation has been conceptualized in Nepal in terms of a 'Grand Alliance' of district level NGOs, human rights groups and community organizations for the promotion of girls' rights. This aims to build on the UNICEF country programme strategy of decentralization and community participation, and to support existing programmes by providing planning advice and training in the use of Meena materials. The process involves district level orientation workshops to identify interested partner agencies, establishment of a district coordinating committee with a lead NGO, and the signing of an agreement between NGOs and UNICEF to guide planning and implementation of MCI activities. Training is then provided to NGO managers and field personnel on using Meena materials. By the end of 2001, it was reported that the district level programme had reached 821 villages in 42 of Nepal's 75 districts. Typical activities at village level include Meena screenings followed by group discussions, essay competitions, debates, and street drama.

The MCI has also involved international NGOs and bilateral agencies. Orientation on Meena has been provided by UNICEF personnel at planning and training sessions conducted by the Nepal Red Cross Society, Nepal Jaycees, Nepal Children's Organisation, Plan International, Care International, Redd Barna, Save the Children (US), National Committee on Beyond Beijing Activities, and bilateral agencies such as GTZ and DANIDA. Agencies such as these are using Meena in their own projects.

An injection of funds from the regional office in 2003 enabled two new initiatives to be undertaken. The first was the inclusion of *Meena's Three Wishes* booklets and a bar of soap in Back-to-School kits supplied by UNICEF and WFP as part of the Quick Impact Programme for children in the mid and far-west areas of Nepal that are experiencing conflict and instability. This was intended to cover about 400 schools in nine districts, involving about 40,000 children. The second initiative is the inclusion of *Meena Reaching Out* booklets (focusing on HIV/AIDS issues) in UNICEF Out of School programmes, to provide information and to promote discussions. This is part of a broader UNICEF Nepal HIV/AIDS

project designed to mainstream HIV/AIDS activities into UNICEF programming. Training and orientation on how to use the materials form part of this initiative.

The planning and implementation of the MCI in Nepal provides a useful example of tailoring a communication campaign to meet specific contextual features and needs. This issue constitutes a major aspect of any conceptualization and planning for sustainability of the MCI across the multi-dimensional South Asian region, as discussed later in this report.

Pakistan

UNICEF Pakistan has been a key player in the conceptualization, development and implementation of the MCI. Particular contributions were made in Phase One to the characterization and presentation of the materials, with the Meena theme song being composed and recorded in Pakistan, Meena's long shirt being drawn from Pakistani clothing, and the idea for the character of Mithu coming from a children's book produced by UNICEF Pakistan. The first Meena episode and supporting materials were trialled in Pakistan in this phase, attracting a very positive response.

Phase Two was characterized by a gradual integration of the MCI into existing UNICEF sectoral programmes in education, health and girl child/ child rights promotion. It was also used in project training packages, with detailed guides being produced to accompany the materials. At the end of this phase, in 1997-98, the BBC broadcast the Meena radio series in Urdu.

Phase Three began with a full-scale mass media launch of the MCI in 1998, following the completion of the initial animation series. The launch involved, or led to, a series of events, including -

- 13 Meena episodes, three Public Service Announcements and three promotional spots being broadcast repeatedly, in peak family viewing times, over a four month period by Pakistan Television. This was followed by the broadcasting of 13 new composite programmes that included children's participation, in 1999-2000.
- 12 Meena radio stories plus expert discussion, being broadcast in Urdu on all 24 radio stations, and also by satellite, reaching 38 countries.
- Showing of Meena films and promotional messages on closed circuit television at three international airports, seven railway stations and on an express train.

- Serialization of Meena comic books in newspapers, plus extensive newspaper coverage of Meena events.
- A series of special events, such as Meena shows via AV Vans in 158 city venues, Meena festivals and quiz programmes, and Meena Fairs for children from orphanages, special education schools and low-income groups.

Particular emphasis has been placed on developing partnerships for the MCI in Pakistan. Some examples of partnership activities are outlined in the following.

The **Pakistan Girls Guides Association** introduced two Meena Girl Guide badge awards (Girl Child Badge and Education Badge) in 1995, supported by UNICEF printed handbooks. Over 80,000 girls successfully completed the badge award requirements from 1997 to 2002. Meena materials are used in leadership training courses for the Guides, and Meena is used to promote Guide activities and to encourage membership.

The **Balochistan Boy Scouts Association** has directly involved its members in the promotion of girls' education and rights. In 2000, the Brothers Join Meena Project was launched. In this project, the Scouts use Meena material to disseminate information aimed at promoting change in relation to specific children's and girls' rights, literacy, immunization and hygiene issues. A recent addition to the issues was that of HIV/AIDS. The project has seen thousands of scouts and hundreds of teachers and key citizens involved in training or sensitization sessions on the main issues. Following its initial success in Balochistan, the project has been extended to 23 of the 26 districts in Balochistan, six districts in Sindh and three districts in Punjab, with over 40,000 scouts being involved.

The **Family Planning Association of Pakistan** has used Meena materials with groups of teenage girls for discussion on issues about rights, education, nutrition and health. This has led to the formation of local groups of girls who make house-to-house visits and promote girls' education in their communities. To date, this activity has been conducted in 550 locations throughout Pakistan

The **Department of Education, North West Frontier Province**, has distributed 650,000 copies of Meena comic books to primary school children and school libraries. A one day training course and a training booklet were provided for teachers to assist them in effective use of the materials.

Health Education Officers working for the **Ministry of Health** have been trained in effective use of Meena materials. The materials are being used with child patients in major hospitals, school health committees and participants in health-related events in schools and communities.

Meena has been declared as the Special Ambassador for Rights of Pakistani Children. The high profile achieved by the MCI in Pakistan was reflected in the selection of the *Brothers Join Meena* project as the focus for the international launch of UNICEF's State of the World's Children Report in Geneva in 2004.

The experience of the MCI in Pakistan demonstrates the potential benefits to be gained in developing partnerships with appropriate agencies and organizations. These include extending the potential reach of the interventions, increasing audience receptivity (by means of the endorsement of the partner agency or organization to its own clientele) and some sharing of costs. The extent to which these partnerships can be maintained without continuing substantial support from UNICEF needs to be carefully considered however in planning for long-term sustainability of the MCI.

1.1.7 Meena in other South Asian countries

In recent times, countries in the region other than Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan have adapted and used the MCI materials. These countries include Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

In **Bhutan**, Meena was launched in September 1998 on the SAARC Meena Day with five Meena episodes being shown, in English, on national television. An accompanying adapted radio series was broadcast in the national language, Dzongkha, on national radio. In 1999, 35 scout trainers undertook training to facilitate discussions of Meena materials in school-based scout activities in eight districts. A Meena Training of Trainers (TOT) workshop for government ministry and UNICEF-Bhutan personnel was conducted in 2002, leading to the development of a joint utilization plan. 20,000 Meena comic books have been printed in English, the medium of instruction, and placed in schools, and Meena is featuring in school programs. A further 12,500 copies of five of the comic books have been translated into Dzongkha and printed for distribution to all non-formal education participants in the country. The intention is to use the books to generate discussions among teachers, local authorities and students on why girls should be educated, how to accelerate girls' enrolment and how to eliminate gender disparity in education in Bhutan.

In mid-2003, funding was provided by the UNICEF Regional Office to UNICEF-Bhutan to support advocacy activities relating to girls' education and the elimination of gender disparities by 2005. This funding has been used, in part, to print, in collaboration with Bhutan Post, 10,000 sheets of Meena postage stamps and 5,000 copies of Meena posters, each carrying the message *Educate Every Girl and Boy*. Posters have been placed in buses and taxis throughout the country. The funding was also used to launch the *State of the World's Children Report 2004*, with the theme of the launch being girls' education, and to support the printing of a four page supplement in the national newspaper that featured Meena messages related to girls' education.

Steps towards the implementation of the MCI in the **Maldives** began with the involvement of government and UNICEF-Maldives personnel in a regional Meena workshop in 2002. A selection of Meena videos and booklets has subsequently been translated into Dhivehi, with dubbing and printing expected to be completed in early 2004. It is planned to launch Meena in February 2004, with booklets and DVDs to be distributed to schools. Two trainers from the Education Ministry have been trained in a Meena TOT workshop in Sri Lanka.

The MCI commenced in **Sri Lanka** in 1996. By 2001, the first five Meena episodes had been dubbed into Sinhala and Tamil and shown on national television. Formative research was undertaken in 2002 on three episodes, with local researchers being trained. An advocacy workshop was conducted in 2002, attracting a range of personnel from government ministries and other organizations. A TOT workshop was also conducted in 2002, leading to the development of strategies for Meena dissemination. These included plans to integrate the MCI into the school curriculum. UNICEF is producing print materials that are tailored to meet the country's specific needs, focusing on issues such as Iron Deficiency Anaemia, use of iodised salt and domestic child labour. Meena materials and concepts are also being integrated into other UNICEF assisted programmes such as the Child Rights Education programme and the Mine Risk Education programme.

By the end of 2003, approximately 600 trainers had been trained in the use of Meena materials in Sri Lanka, and a further 1,000 people had participated in community level orientation workshops for those interested in promoting the MCI. All of the Meena films are now being broadcast on national television, and the films have been reproduced on VHS tapes for use in the field.

UNICEF Sri Lanka has included the MCI as part of programme communication activities in its 2004 work plans, and has provided for funding from the respective programmes.

In **Laos**, a dubbed version of the Meena series is being regularly broadcast on television, and the HIV/AIDS episode shown at public events. Some training has also been provided in Laos.

In **Cambodia**, eight Meena episodes have been dubbed into Khmer and shown on television. 700 video copies and facilitator guides have been distributed to schools and rural communities.

The Mai project has been running in **Viet Nam** since 1998, mainly in areas populated by ethnic minorities with poor access to information and services. The name 'Meena' was changed to the more locally relevant 'Mai' in Vietnam. Eight episodes of Meena have been translated into Vietnamese and the ethnic minority languages Bana, Khmer, H'mong and Tay. Flip-charts, leaflets and cartoon books have been visually adapted to fit the Vietnamese culture. In 2002, a team of researchers was trained in qualitative methods by the Regional Office. In 2003, 20 master trainers from the Women's Union were trained in effective utilization of the Meena materials and life skill issues. This TOT workshop also led to the development of a draft training manual for field workers. By the end of 2003, 31 project officers and 310 local motivators had been trained to facilitate Meena discussions.

As well as provision of materials, a key aspect of developing the MCI in the above countries has been the provision of training to field workers in facilitating discussion, using Meena as an entry point. This recognizes that for communication on social development to have an impact and to be sustainable, communities need to engage in collective discussion and decision making, rather than being preached to or persuaded from top-down¹². The training has been in the form of structured TOT workshops, involving experiential learning activities focusing on understanding of the concept and objectives of the MCI; using the Meena materials at community level; understanding of life skills concepts and how life skills may be acquired through Meena; strengthening linkages and networks with partners in promoting the MCI; and developing dissemination plans for use of Meena¹³.

1.1.8 Previous assessments of the MCI

Some studies on the MCI were undertaken in the period 1997 to 1999. Details of their samples and data gathering and analysis procedures could not always be ascertained from the material available. The studies have in general found a positive reception to Meena, as seen in the summary findings provided below¹⁴.

The *Meena Impact Study* (1997) in **Pakistan** concluded that after exposure to Meena materials there was an all-round shift in children towards being more ‘gender-fair’, as well as becoming more ‘expressive, imaginative, spontaneous and bold. ... Looking from a Child Rights’ perspective, Meena can be a strong tool for restoring childhood – in some significant ways – to a large segment of children, which has been robbed of it. ... It introduces change in attitudes of children towards child and gender related issues.’

A *National Media Study* (1998) in **Bangladesh** found that 44% urban and 17% rural adults recalled Meena from TV. 97% of these adults stated that they liked Meena ‘very much’. Of Dhaka residents who watch TV, more than 50% knew the Meena character and identified the series as being about “girls’ rights”.

The *Baseline survey* for the Meena component of the IDEAL project (1999) in **Bangladesh** indicated that of school-going children, 87% of girls and 84% of boys knew of Meena. Identification with Meena’s character was strong. Of school-going children, 87% of girls and 86% of boys reported that they practise what Meena does. 77% of parents saw Meena as a small village girl, only 10% perceiving her strictly as a cartoon character. The total sample size was 3,787.

Case studies (1999) in **Nepal** to look into Meena’s impact, studying individual girls in their family and community context, found that girls compared themselves with Meena and aspired to do what she does. Parents indicated how Meena had convinced them about the need to educate girls.

An assessment of the re-named Mai communication initiative in **Vietnam** in 2003 found it to have had 'good impact on the community, authorities, different local branches and organizations. The effect was not only the change of awareness, but also of behaviors of the community on children's rights and fresh water and environmental sanitation'¹⁵.

1.1.9 Conclusion

The preceding sections indicate that the MCI comprises a complex set of intentions, processes, activities, events and outcomes that have occurred and evolved over a lengthy period across a range of different settings. Its history has been characterized by attempts to customize its content, presentation and modes of delivery to meet varying contextual features and needs, while maintaining its core messages and intentions.

Its history also illustrates the complexity involved in seeking to effect fundamental change in life practices. Research in this area indicates the significance of at least three main factors in promoting such change, namely the development of shared understanding among the parties involved, the development of shared commitment, and the provision of appropriate and sufficient resources to implement and sustain the change. The potential effectiveness of any planning or implementation processes can, in part, be assessed by examining the extent to which such factors are being addressed.

The MCI is continuing to change and develop, but has reached a stage where its existence can no longer rely on significant levels of donor funding as provided in its first three phases. Considerable attention has been given to promoting its sustainability in recent years – the findings of this evaluation should assist in adding to the information bases on which decisions about the future directions and sustainability of the MCI may be taken.

1.2 Scope, focus and purposes of the evaluation

The evaluation focuses on the key evaluation criteria of effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. key outcomes and implementation processes of the MCI in four countries in South Asia, namely Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal. In particular, the evaluation was designed with the following intentions -

- To describe and assess the key outcomes of the MCI in terms of achieved reach, awareness and knowledge, life skills practices, and perceptions and attitudes to Meena as an entertainment education medium. In relation to life skills practices outcomes, the intentions include an assessment of attribution of outcomes, to the extent it is reasonable and feasible to do so.

- To describe and assess the implementation processes in each of the four countries, identifying the key inputs, activities, implementation strategies, efficiency of activities, enabling factors and constraints.
- To assess and document the financial costs of key stages of implementation to enable an understanding of the cost of the MCI.
- To identify potential for expansion and sustainability of the MCI.

The audiences for the evaluation are identified as the UNICEF country and regional offices, the donors who have funded the MCI, and partner organizations involved in the MCI implementation.

1.3 Outline and structure of the report

This introduction is followed in chapter 2 by an outline of the methodology adopted for the evaluation, including a description of the conceptual framework, the key questions addressed, the procedures for data collection and analysis, the procedures incorporated to promote validity and reliability, and an identification of the limitations of the study.

The findings are presented and discussed in chapter 3, in terms of the four key aspects of outcomes, implementation processes, costs and potential for expansion and sustainability.

Chapter 4 presents the key findings, conclusions drawn from these findings, and lessons learnt from the evaluation. It concludes with an outline of possible future directions for the MCI for consideration, and a series of specific recommendations.

Chapter 2 Methodology

2.1 Framework for the evaluation

The evaluation is of a formative nature, focusing on the MCI during its implementation in four specific country contexts. In each of these contexts, the nature of the MCI and its implementation processes have been tailored to suit the particular characteristics in which it is operating. The goals and objectives of the MCI apply across the four country contexts, but the ways in which these have been pursued have varied to some extent. This has been recognized in the evaluation design by allowing for decentralised planning and implementation of the evaluation at country level, while ensuring consistency of the method mix and the information needed to address each evaluation question.

The evaluation focuses on implementation processes and short term outcomes in specific contexts. Due attention needs to be given to these contexts in interpreting the findings, identifying the lessons learnt and indicating future directions.

The country contexts vary in terms of the nature, extent and duration of MCI implementation, as well as prevailing social, economic, political, organizational and religious traditions and practices. The rights, understandings, life skills and practices of the girl child provide the common focus across the contextual differences.

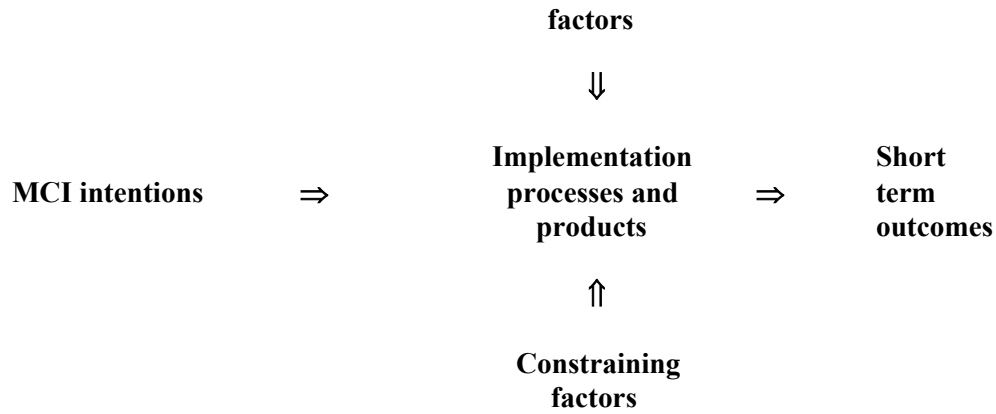
The evaluation seeks to provide an understanding of the implementation of the MCI in the four countries, along with the factors that have helped and constrained its operation. This in turn is seen as providing an informed basis on which to make judgments about the MCI, using the following criteria –

- Relevance for specific contexts
- Effectiveness in terms of reaching its intended audiences and meeting its objectives
- Efficiency of implementation in terms of its financial costs compared to observed short term outcomes
- Capacity for expansion
- Sustainability

The MCI may be seen in terms of the following diagrammatic representation.

The MCI in its country and regional contexts

Helping



This representation indicates the critical significance of the contexts in which the MCI interventions are occurring. These contexts are associated with specific helping and constraining factors that serve to influence the nature and extent of outcomes achieved in the short term from the interventions.

The evaluation framework, as shown below, recognizes the significance of the contexts in seeking to develop understanding of the MCI and its outcomes.

The Evaluation

Information gathering

from

Records and people involved in or affected by the MCI (children, parents, teachers, leaders, UNICEF Officials, government and NGO personnel)

by means of

- **document review**
- **household survey**
- **focus group discussions**
- **interviews**
- **workshops, meetings**
- **other participatory strategies**

in order to produce

detailed description and understanding of the MCI in terms of-

- **short-term outcomes**
- **efficiency of implementation**
- **costs**
- **factors helping and constraining its operation**
- **lessons learnt**
- **options for expansion and sustainability**

The evaluation design is based on an acceptance of the soundness of the overall approach of the MCI, deriving from the extensive theoretical and field based research that guided its development¹⁶. The approach indicates that the MCI has the potential to deliver its intended outcomes. The evaluation seeks to test this by examining the implementation processes adopted as the means for achieving this potential, and the factors influencing the nature and effects of these processes. In turn, findings from this are seen as providing an informed basis for generating recommendations about the future operation of the MCI.

2.2 Key questions addressed by the evaluation

A number of key questions have been identified for each of the four main focus areas, as detailed below.

Outcomes of the MCI

Reach

- a. What were the geographic/administrative areas in which the communication campaign was carried out and what is the size of the target population?
- b. Within the targeted areas what is the proportion and profile of population reached by the different communication channels?

Awareness and knowledge

- a. To what extent have the children and women gained knowledge of intended messages from the initiative?
- b. Which social or age groups were less knowledgeable and why? Are there gender differentials?

Life skills practices

- a. In relation to messages communicated by Meena (as contained in the materials disseminated in the respective communities) what practices are seen? Are any of these different for groups who were not exposed to Meena?
- b. What are the reasons for the adoption or non adoption of behaviour change as intended by the MCI?

Perceptions of and attitudes towards Meena

Among those exposed to Meena,

- a. What was the level of receptivity to different materials and channels of communication e.g TV, radio, facilitated discussion, videos etc.?
- b. Which materials and means of communication were the more popular?
- c. To what extent was Meena character perceived as a role model?
- d. What were the endearing features of Meena character and the other characters?
- e. What modifications are needed for better acceptability and memorability of message?
- f. What materials were considered useful and what were actually used? How?
- g. How is Meena rated as an entertainment programme compared to other entertainment or educational programmes?
- h. Have stories stimulated interpersonal communication?

Implementation of the MCI

- a. What were the key steps in implementing the initiative from decision to implement to completion or if on going up to current status?
- b. What were the decision making processes that determined the scope and approaches for implementation?
- c. How participatory and owned were these steps?
- d. How efficiently were these steps carried out in terms of conforming to planned time lines and coverage?

- e. To what extent were capacities developed in UNICEF and among partners for life skills development ?
- f. Are there cases of multiplication/ replication after the introductory phases and if so what is the nature and extent?
- g. What factors facilitated the implementation and how?
- h. What factors constrained the implementation as planned and how?

Costs

- a. What were the costs involved and how do they compare with achieved results in terms of outcomes?

Potential for expansion and sustainability

- a. What are the examples where the initiative has been replicated/multiplied by partners or others such as media organisations?
- b. What is the scope for expansion and what are the potential modalities in terms of communication approaches, partners etc for such expansion?
- c. What lessons can be learnt from implementation that was successful and what were the commonalities of efforts that failed, if any?
- d. What are some of the suggestions that have emerged from the evaluation in terms of alternative ways in which Meena could be used for promoting the rights of children and women?

2.3 Methodological procedures

Separate organizations were contracted by UNICEF-ROSA to undertake the evaluations in each of the four countries. The organizations were ACNielsen Bangladesh, Centre for Media Studies India (CMS), ACNielsen Nepal and Gallup Pakistan. A regional evaluation consultant was contracted, to provide technical guidance to the country studies and to synthesise the findings from them into an overall evaluation.

In consultation with UNICEF-ROSA and the regional evaluation consultant, the four organizations developed customized versions of data gathering instruments. The various instruments were reviewed and consolidated so that they all had a standard format and a common set of questions while allowing for country specific interventions. The customized versions maintained the focus on the key evaluation questions but with modifications designed to address the particular MCI implementation contexts of each country or state/province . Thus, for example, the Pakistan household survey instrument included specific questions on the *Brothers Join Meena* project for respondents in Balochistan. The instruments enabled

the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data by the four organizations, as outlined in Sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 below.

A participatory process was applied throughout the planning, implementation and reporting stages of the evaluation, while ensuring independence through use of the independent regional consultant and research organizations. This began with the involvement of the four UNICEF country offices and the regional office in determining the focus and scope of the evaluation. These deliberations included planning and monitoring and evaluation officers. Proposals to undertake the country evaluations were considered by the respective country offices and regional personnel, leading to the selection of the four research organisations. The regional and country office personnel, along with the regional consultant, then reviewed the draft instruments prepared by the country teams, in order to produce an acceptable set with a standard format and common sets of questions, as well as items that related to country-specific aspects of MCI implementation. The country offices in turn facilitated the fieldwork undertaken, assisting in decisions on areas from which to gather information and providing details of key personnel in the field. These same offices, and their state and province/district offices, also responded to the evaluation questionnaires relating to implementation and costs of the MCI in their respective countries. Finally, the offices provided feedback on the draft reports submitted by the respective evaluation teams.

2.3.1 Quantitative data collection procedures and instruments

For the evaluation outcomes questions on *reach, awareness and knowledge, life skills practices, and perceptions and attitudes towards Meena*, a household survey instrument was developed (see Appendix). The instrument took the form of a structured interview schedule for adults and children in selected households, with most of the questions having a series of pre-coded response options and a small number being of an open-ended nature. The specific information that was being sought corresponded, in a more detailed fashion, to the key evaluation questions listed earlier (see section 2.2). Accordingly, the schedule included questions on the respondent's characteristics and background (age, gender, education, capacity to read and write), life skill practices, awareness and knowledge of Meena and the Meena messages, exposure to and preferences for various communication media, and perceptions of and attitudes towards Meena.

The household survey was planned for Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. For Nepal, it was decided to use the findings from a survey that had already been conducted there in 2002 (see Valley Research Group, 2003). The questionnaire was prepared in the appropriate local language for each country or state. Thus,

for example in India, the questionnaire was prepared in Hindi for Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and in Oriya for Orissa.

Training was provided for the field workers collecting the household data. This included orientation to the MCI, as well as to the research methodology of the study and the specific use of the questionnaire. Cross checks and quality checks were made by Supervisors in the field to verify and validate the data being collected.

The samples were generally selected using a three stage stratified cluster design, with sample allocation being population proportional to size. The stratification was by the type of intervention. Variations to this were incorporated to cater for districts with relatively low populations and in response to uncertainty on population figures in some cases. Samples were selected from areas in which the MCI had been implemented, seeking as far as possible to cover various levels of intervention, ranging from high multiple program intervention to low minor program intervention. The ages of children targeted for the survey varied among the countries, depending on the years in which the MCI had been implemented.

In Bangladesh, two districts were selected for the survey from each of the country's six divisions. From each of these districts, two upazila (administrative units) were selected, followed by a selection of two rural villages and two urban wards within each upazila. A selection of households in each of the villages and wards was then made, following a systematic sampling procedure. In total, the sample comprised 1202 adults, 1200 children aged from 7 to 11 years, and 1200 children aged from 12 to 18 years.

In India, the three states of Orissa, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh were selected for the evaluation. These particular states were selected on the basis of having experienced substantial implementation of the MCI in the form of learning projects, but each through different strategies. In Orissa, the intervention was largely through local Meena Clubs. In Bihar, it involved multi-media including Muppet Shows and workshops. In Uttar Pradesh, it was largely through the education system.

Within each state, two districts in which the MCI has been implemented were selected,

Kendrapara and Jajpur, from Orissa;

East Champaran and Begusarai, from Bihar; and

Gonda and Barabanki, from Uttar Pradesh.

Information available to the study team showed that in Orissa, interventions (formation of Meena Clubs) occurred in 125 villages in Kendrapara district and 35 villages in Jajpur district. In Bihar, interventions (the muppet shows) occurred in four villages in East Champaran district and 21 villages in Begusarai

district. In Uttar Pradesh, six villages in Barabanki district and 24 villages in Gonda were exposed to MCI interventions (i.e. teachers from these villages were oriented and given training to use Meena in their classrooms). In the absence of good sampling frames providing recent data on the population of these villages, particularly the population of children in the age group of 10 to 18 years, it was decided to select a sample of villages taking the following into consideration.

- Total number of villages in which interventions had taken place
- Sufficient sample spread
- The practical difficulties of achieving the sample among the target respondents in each selected village.

Thus, in Orissa, the study covered 19 villages in Kendrapara district and 5 villages in Jajpur district. This ensured adequate spread and also made it possible to contact the requisite number of households in each village. In each district the required number of villages was selected randomly from the list of villages in which MCI interventions had taken place.

Using a similar approach, in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, from each selected district, half of the villages were taken as the study population. Thus, in the case of Bihar, the study covered two villages in East Champaran district and 11 villages in Begusarai district. Similarly in Uttar Pradesh, the study covered three villages in Barabanki and 15 villages in Gonda district.

Respondents were selected from each village with systematic random sampling, using the voters' list, the only available source of information, as the sampling frame.

The data therefore are representative only of the group of villages selected from each state. In total, the sample comprised 2324 adults and 2324 children aged from 10-18 years.

In Pakistan, the 111 districts in the country's four provinces (Punjab, Sindh, NWFP and Balochistan) were stratified into three categories based on the level of MCI implementation -

1. High implementation (multiple interventions)
2. Moderate implementation (one intervention)
3. Low implementation (MCI launch or minor intervention).

A total of 30 districts was selected with probability proportional to size, and from each level of intervention in the provincial populations. Study locations within each district were selected using the PPS method or random selection in cases where the target population size was unclear. In addition to the household survey, 200 Boy Scouts and 82 Girl Guides were surveyed to provide a comparison of the MCI between children directly involved in the implementation and their peers who had been reached

indirectly. In total, including the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, the sample comprised 1,512 adults and 1,887 children aged from 12-20 years.

For the evaluation *implementation* and *potential for expansion and sustainability* questions, questionnaires were developed for UNICEF personnel at both country and regional levels (see Appendices). These questionnaires sought details of staff involvement in the MCI over time, involvement in MCI training, MCI interventions (timing, funding, partners, target audiences, geographic coverage), distribution of materials, organisations using Meena materials, use of Meena materials in UNICEF programmes, support for the MCI, and the MCI's potential and sustainability. Questionnaires were also developed for these groups to address the evaluation *cost* questions (see Appendices), covering matters such as details of funds received, breakdown of expenditure, and views on what else could be funded and how costs might be reduced.

2.3.2 Qualitative data collection procedures and instruments

To complement the household survey, a series of focus group discussions was conducted, focusing on awareness and understanding, appreciation and application of the MCI messages. The focus group discussions were supplemented by other strategies to elicit the views of people involved in or affected by the MCI. These included interviews, workshops and meetings. A set of guidelines and key questions was developed for each of the focus group discussions and related strategies.

In general, the discussions and related strategies were undertaken in the areas selected for the quantitative data collection. In Nepal however, as previously reported, the quantitative data findings were drawn from a survey that had already been conducted there in 2002, rather than from a concurrent household survey. Given this, it was decided to undertake the qualitative data collection strategies in six districts in which Meena activities had been conducted up to 2002. The districts and their regions were Sunsari and Morang (Eastern Region), Parsa (Central Region), Nawalparasi and Tanahun (Western Region), and Dang (Mid and Far Western Region). The selection of districts was in part governed by issues of accessibility and security. Hill and terai areas were represented in the selection. In total, 25 focus group discussions were conducted with teachers, parents and children in these districts and regions. Other meetings were held with children in which the children directly evaluated samples of Meena materials and activities.

In Bangladesh, the focus group discussions involved 40 people, comprising 12 parents, 12 adolescents aged from 12 to 18 years, nine teachers and community leaders and seven retailers. In-depth interviews were also conducted with 150 people, comprising 50 parents, 51 adolescents, 29 teachers and community leaders and 20 retailers.

In India, discussions were held with 10 of the teachers trained to use Meena in Uttar Pradesh; 20 trainers and trainees in Uttar Pradesh and Orissa; 30 Government Officials at State, District and Block levels across the three states; and two to four UNICEF communication and program officials in each of the states. Four MCI Partner Workshops involving Government, NGO and UNICEF representatives were also conducted to obtain feedback on MCI implementation and sustainability. Three day-long workshops were held in the participating states, while the fourth was at a national level and of two days duration.

In Pakistan, focus group discussions were held with a total of 151 parents, children, community leaders and teachers. A further participatory technique was used in Pakistan, involving a group of children from grades 8, 9 and 10 in each of two schools in Islamabad. In each group, the children watched and evaluated an episode of Meena, with discussion being led by a member of the group. The research agency observed and recorded details of the discussion. The participation of children in this activity was voluntary and preceded by an explanation of its purpose.

To supplement the questionnaires focusing on the evaluation *implementation* and *potential for expansion and sustainability* questions (see 2.3.1), some key informant discussions were also held with people at different levels of implementation of the MCI.

2.3.3 Review of documentation

A range of documentation on the MCI was made available to the regional evaluation consultant by UNICEF-ROSA and a number of key informants. This provided access to details of the MCI's history, development processes, reports, materials and reported outcomes. The information gathered through this process helped to provide a series of contexts for the evaluation, with these in turn assisting in the analysis of the country level evaluation data and findings. Relevant aspects of the information have been presented in Sections 1.1.1 to 1.1.8 of this report.

2.3.4 Discussions with key informants and country evaluation teams

A series of discussions was held with key informants from UNICEF regional and country Offices and the country evaluation teams. The discussions with UNICEF personnel extended access to information on the MCI beyond that which was being gained from the review of documentation as well as enabling key issues to be explored in greater depth.

2.3.5 Review of country level data and reports

Each of the four country evaluation teams prepared and submitted a draft evaluation report to UNICEF-ROSA outlining their procedures, data and findings. Samples of data were also submitted during the data gathering period. The data and reports were reviewed by UNICEF-ROSA personnel and the regional

evaluation consultant, with feedback being provided to the teams for their consideration. A final report was then submitted by each team.

2.3.6 Analysis of data

Analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data was undertaken by each of the four country teams, in accordance with procedures and protocols that had been discussed and agreed to in the evaluation design and planning stages. Frequencies and cross-tabulations provided major aspects of the analysis and reporting of the quantitative data, as may be seen in Chapter 3 of this report. The qualitative data were primarily analysed by means of content analysis. This involved the classification and coding of data using conceptual schema derived from the listing of key evaluation questions. The schema had earlier informed the design of the data gathering instruments, thereby building in a pre-coding system.

2.4 Validity and reliability

Procedures to promote the validity and reliability of the evaluation findings were discussed with the country teams as part of their design processes. Those adopted include the use of multiple data sources, review of data and findings by more than one person, detailed descriptions of contexts and procedures in reports, and use of low-inference descriptors such as verbatim accounts of participant statements. The use of an external regional evaluation consultant was also seen as providing an independent and impartial participant in the overall process. Part of the consultant's role was to advise the country teams on the appropriateness of the methodology, analysis and reporting in which they were engaged, and to review and give feedback on each of these aspects.

2.5 Ethical issues

Procedures to safeguard and respect the rights of all involved in the evaluation were also discussed and agreed with the country teams as part of their design processes. These involved for example, voluntary participation in evaluation processes on basis of informed consent, the right to withdraw without giving reason at any time, anonymity for individuals and organizations in any reporting of the evaluation unless otherwise freely agreed, and seeking to meet the convenience of participants in the gathering of any information.

2.6 Limitations of the study

The findings of this evaluation need to be considered in the light of a number of limitations arising as a result of the nature of the MCI and the contexts in which it has been implemented and evaluated. First, the MCI is one of a number of factors that potentially may have had an influence on the types of understandings, skills and practices on which it focuses. It has been implemented alongside and in conjunction with other education, health, child protection, human rights and gender equity programmes. Identifying the extent to which observed outcomes may be attributed to the MCI thus becomes

problematic. The study relies largely on people's perceptions of the impact of the MCI and the extent to which they have been able to articulate these in their provision of information for the evaluation.

Secondly, the timing of the evaluation makes it essentially a retrospective study, with participants seeking to identify changes that have occurred since and in response to MCI interventions. This in part places reliance on memories which are subject to incompleteness, reinterpretation and re-creation over time. In like manner, documentation on the implementation of the MCI since 1991 is in some cases incomplete. Key personnel have also departed during that time, again diminishing some of the memory that is now accessible.

Thirdly, the evaluation is dealing with proxy data, i.e. indirect measures of changes in skills and practices revealed through perceptions, as distinct from direct measures of actual skills and practices compared to previous levels measured for the same participants before exposure to the intervention.

Fourthly, the country level findings that are drawn together in this report derive from a range of quite different contexts, both within and across the countries involved. The findings have been examined to see if there are commonly occurring themes, but ultimately each set of findings can only be understood within the context in which its underpinning data were gathered. In particular it should be noted that the limitations in selecting the Indian study population mean that the data relate specifically to the selected group of villages. The extent to which any of the specific findings is generalisable across the region is accordingly limited.

Chapter 3 Findings and discussion

3.1 Introduction

As noted in Section 2.3 of this report, each of the four country evaluation teams analysed the quantitative and qualitative data that they had gathered and produced a report outlining their procedures, data summaries and findings. The material in these four reports, together with the review of documentation and discussions with key informants and evaluation teams undertaken by the regional evaluation consultant, provide the basis for the findings outlined in the following sections. The key evaluation questions listed in the Terms of Reference (see section 2.2) provide the organizational framework for the presentation. For each of these questions, an outline of the findings is presented, followed by analysis of their significance and/or implications for the evaluation and future implementation of the MCI.

3.2 Findings

3.2.1 Outcomes

The key evaluation questions relating to outcomes of the MCI were categorized in terms of reach, awareness and knowledge, life skills practices, and perceptions of and attitudes towards Meena. Each of these is addressed in the following.

3.2.1.1 Reach

What were the geographic/administrative areas in which the communication campaign was carried out and what is the size of the target population?

As outlined in section 1.1.5, the pattern of MCI implementation in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal has been a mixture of nation-wide dissemination of materials, by means such as national television and radio presentations, and specific strategies targeted at particular groups and/or geographical areas within each country. The timing elements of the pattern have varied, with audience access to materials and activities beginning at different times across the four countries, and specific interventions operating for a variety of time periods, with some subsequently repeated. The focus and timing of the MCI have thus created a complex target area pattern, ranging from whole country to particular project areas, with the pattern changing and evolving over time as the specific interventions occur and finish. In turn, this has meant varying target population sizes, ranging from total national populations to local populations associated with specific local interventions. Each of these populations has also varied in size and

composition as people move into and out of them, an example being that of the changing primary school population from year to year.

Examples from specific countries serve to illustrate and delineate this complex target area/target population picture. In Bangladesh, the screening and broadcasting of Meena episodes on national television and radio, the distribution of one million Meena comic books to primary schools in 1993, and the hosting of Meena events in urban centers by Shishu Academies, represent interventions pitched at different scales and types of sometimes overlapping audiences. A similar theme emerges in India, where a focus on exposure through national mass media has been accompanied by state-specific interventions such as the Meena Muppet Road Show in Bihar and Meena Clubs in Orissa.

In India and Nepal, particular geographic areas were selected for intensive implementation of the MCI. In India, these were reported to comprise the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, with some sporadic activity taking place in West Bengal and Assam. It should be noted that within these states, not all districts were covered, and within each district, not all villages were covered. In Nepal, the focus on district level implementation has covered more than half (42) of the country's 75 districts. In Bangladesh, the use of a mass mobilization campaign essentially meant that the whole country was targeted from as early as 1992. Population figures for that period indicate a target girl children (7-18 years) population of over 17 million and an all women target population of over 57 million.¹⁷ A similar process occurred in Pakistan, from 1998 onwards.

The information available to the country evaluation teams did not enable generation of comprehensive target audience profiles for the MCI in terms of location and size over time. The descriptions of specific interventions in each country, as outlined in section 1.1.5, provide some indications of locations. Indications of audience size may be provided by accessing population data. Thus, for example, in 2000, about midway during the operation of Phase Three, the populations aged 10-24 in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan were estimated to be 46.5 million (36% of total population), 300.2 million (30% of total), 7.8 million (33% of total) and 49.1 million (31% of total) respectively¹⁸. The relevance of these figures in turn depends on the particular definition of target audiences for specific interventions. The nature of the MCI is such that it needs to influence boys, parents, and other community members, as well as girls, if it is to achieve its full potential.

The difficulties in identifying the reach of the MCI, as outlined above, carry a number of implications for future strategic planning and implementation of the initiative. Specific attention needs to be given to clearly identifying the location, size and other defining characteristics of the target audiences for specific

interventions in advance of the interventions. This will enable a clearer identification and analysis of audience needs, and an assessment of possible intervention overlaps, disjunctions and complementarities. This in effect is providing a process of proactive design evaluation. It also lays the foundation for subsequent monitoring and impact evaluation by providing a clearer picture of intervention intentions, targets and pre-existing target audience characteristics.

Within the targeted areas what is the proportion and profile of population reached by the different communication channels?

A variety of communication channels has been adopted in the MCI. These can be classified broadly as mass media communication and interpersonal communication. Specific channels include television, radio, story books, film and videotapes, banners, stickers, street theatre, postage stamps, training and discussion. Details of the reach of these channels to the sample populations accessed by the country evaluations are indicated in the following.

Table 1 indicates from the **Bangladesh** household survey, the percentages of those children who were aware of Meena who had heard, seen or read about her from each of various sources. Television emerged as an almost universal source for these children (identified by 96.9% of the sample), with story books identified by about one quarter and stickers and wall paintings each by about one tenth.

Table 1 Sources of access to Meena – Bangladesh

% of children exposed to Meena (n = 842)

Television	97
Story books	24
Stickers	12
Wall printing	10
Poster	5
Radio	3
Video	3
ICDS workers/teachers	3
Banners	2

Comparative data from the **Indian** household questionnaire data are presented in Table 2. Of the total sample of 4,648, around 18% (842) indicated that they were aware of Meena. Each of these 842 respondents was asked to state their source(s) of exposure to Meena. The percentages referring to each source are shown in Table 2, along with a breakdown according to girls in the 'aware group' (n = 291) and girls in each of the three sample states in the 'aware group'. The aggregated responses from all 842 respondents reveal the prime importance of television as a source (61%), with two other sources, story books and street theatre indicated by at least 20% of respondents. This order is replicated in the data from girls only, but changes when analysed by girl respondent groups in each of the three study states. This is not surprising, given the different types of intervention implemented in each state, featuring street theatre (Muppet Shows) in Bihar, Meena Clubs in Orissa and video showings in Uttar Pradesh.

Table 2 Sources of access to Meena – India
 % of respondents aware of Meena

	All n = 842	All Girls n = 291	Girls Bihar n = 37	Girls Orissa n = 221	Girls UP n = 33
Television	61	69	73	76	15
Story books	24	35	22	40	18
Street theatre	21	26	46	26	100
Banners	16	20	22	22	3
Video	15	17	3	11	73
Child friendly panchayats	14	22	8	27	3
Radio	10	11	14	12	3
Training/discussion	9	12	8	15	100
Hanging decorative danglers	7	17	3	22	100
Stickers	6	16	14	19	100
ICDS workers/teachers	6	8	3	10	100
Postage stamps	3	5	14	4	100

The data from **Pakistan**, as shown in Table 3, again point to the importance of television as a major source of exposure to Meena. The significance of television was reported to be high and predominant for all classes of respondents, with the exception of male and rural Punjab. The figures for radio illustrate the variability of reach among different segments of the target population. In terms of the total respondent sample, radio was the next highest rating medium (19%). It attracted a lower rating however among girls (8%) than boys (21%); a lower rating among adolescents (12% for the 16-20 age group) than young adults (28% for the 21-35 age group); and a higher rating in rural areas in Punjab (34%) and Balochistan (46%). By contrast, Meena story books attracted higher ratings among girls (29%) than among boys (17%), those identified as illiterate (7%), or all respondents (19%).

Table 3 Sources of access to Meena – Pakistan

% of respondents

	All respondents n = 4,648	Girls
Television	91	94
Radio	19	8
Story books	19	29
Film	5	1
Meena stickers	5	3
Meena folder	4	2
Banners	3	1
Training and discussion	3	1

Some care is needed in interpreting the above information. As previously noted, the types and intensity of intervention have varied across geographical areas and over time. This limits the range of sources to Meena messages that can be reported by particular respondents. If training and discussion, for example, have not been provided in a certain district, that reduces the overall rating that this source can attract. Other factors may also be serving to constrain accessibility to sources, even when they have been provided to the community. Examples include the impact of low literacy levels (in the case of access to story books) and low income levels (in the case of direct household access to television). The Nepal 2002 study, for example, revealed that less than 30% of the study population of 1,421 children had a television set at home. Despite such qualifications, the impact of television as a major means of communication cannot be ignored.

The key message that emerges from the data and findings on different channels is that decisions on the means of communication for the MCI need to be based on sound research on specific target audiences in each location in terms of the nature and extent of their access to communication resources, their capacity to use such resources, and their levels of receptivity to those that can be accessed. Such research will enable more precise tailoring of the means of communication for specific target groups as a means of addressing more closely their particular needs and contexts. Accompanying this is the need to monitor the extent to which intended targets are being reached, once the intervention has been implemented.

3.2.1.2 Awareness and knowledge

To what extent have the children and women gained knowledge of intended messages from the initiative?

The MCI conveys a range of life skills messages, designed to promote changes in attitudes and life skills practices. The survey questionnaires sought information on the extent to which the target audiences had acquired knowledge of a selection of the intended messages, and the sources of this knowledge. The examples below are used to identify and illustrate the findings.

The 2002 study in **Nepal** outlined findings regarding awareness of messages from the Meena series, as reported by 731 children and 92 mothers in the study sample who had seen the series. These are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Awareness of messages included in Meena – Nepal

% of respondents

Lesson	Girls n = 332	Boys n = 399	Mothers n = 92
Girls are also to be provided education	98	96	95
Need for proper hand washing	97	97	89
Construction of latrines	96	95	87
Girls are to be given equal treatment	95	95	96
Should wear sandals/shoes while going to the toilet	93	91	82
More fluid should be given during diarrhoea	90	83	86
Need for exclusive breastfeeding	81	72	91
Should keep village and environment clean/should not defecate anywhere	9	3	-
Should discard early/child marriage	4	4	1
Should control dowry system	1	1	-

Awareness of messages from Meena also formed part of the discussions held with children and parents in Nepal in the 2003 study. The most commonly reported messages were education of girls, equal treatment of girls and boys, and health issues. In interviews of teachers, equal treatment of girls and boys (including equal educational opportunity), keeping surroundings clean and hygienic hand washing practices were most commonly identified.

The key messages of which respondents were aware, as reported by children and adults in the **Bangladesh** study and by children and women in the **Pakistan** study are shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Awareness of messages from Meena – Bangladesh and Pakistan

% of respondents

	Bangladesh Children n = 2,055	Bangladesh Adults n = 586	Pakistan Children	Pakistan Women
Must wash hands before meals	69	69	89	91
Must wash hands after defecation	67	71	88	91
Girls must also be educated	59	67	95	96
Should drink more fluid during diarrhoea	56	65	79	90
Must drink clean water	56	59	88	92
Must construct hygienic latrines	45	57	86	91
Workload must be shared by brothers and sisters	45	43	86	90
Girls and boys must be treated equally	44	50	90	93
Should keep environment clean	38	42	82	87
It is illegal to marry before 18 years of age	37	50	77	85
Must wear sandals to toilet	34	40	82	92
Should discard early marriage and child marriage	30	37	80	91
Should help neighbours and family	28	32	84	88
Dowry is illegal	27	39	75	81
Should control dowry system	27	39	80	90
All have talents and weaknesses	20	25	81	86
Everyone should refuse to give or take dowry	19	28	74	79

Participants in the focus group discussions in Pakistan recalled a number of the key messages, the most commonly reported ones being the importance of girls' education, equal treatment of girls and boys, sanitation and treatment of diarrhoea.

Tables 4 and 5, as well as the discussion group findings, reveal considerable variation in levels of awareness reported by respondents across the four countries and among the particular message items. This is not surprising, given the varying degrees of exposure of the children and mothers to the episodes and messages of the series in each country. The results point to the potential of the MCI to convey knowledge and to promote awareness, as evidenced by the examples of high levels of reported recall of some of the messages. They also reveal however instances of low levels of awareness, i.e. instances where the potential is not being fully realized. This in turns highlights again the need to identify clearly the target audiences for any specific set of messages, and to ensure that a continuing set of consistent messages are being conveyed over time to those audiences. The earlier description of the implementation of the MCI included cases of 'one-off' interventions, as well as more intensive and continuing interventions. The chances of promoting sustained awareness of key messages are likely to be diminished, to the extent that they are conveyed in 'one-off' or disconnected interventions.

Data from the **Indian** study sheds some light on the sources from which children gained their knowledge of key Meena messages. The Indian survey data indicated that about two thirds of child survey respondents (69% of girls and 64% of boys) knew about dowry. The figures varied across states to some extent, ranging from 62% (Bihar) to 73% (Uttar Pradesh) for girls, and from 61% (Bihar) to 65% (Orissa) for boys. About four fifths of the respondents (79% of girls, 84% of boys, and 84% of all child and adult respondents) identified 18 years or older as the minimum age to marry. Of the respondents who had been exposed to Meena, only 4% identified minimum marriage ages of less than 18 years, compared to more than 14% of those who had not been exposed to Meena.

The sources from which children reported having derived their knowledge on these two issues are shown in Table 6. The sources of knowledge of ways of treating water before drinking, as reported by those who did treat water, are also shown.

Table 6 Knowledge sources for dowry, age of marriage and water treatment - India
% of respondents

Source	Dowry Girls	Dowry Boys	Age of marriage Girls	Age of marriage Boys	Treat water Girls	Treat water Boys

	n = 795	n = 740	n = 1164	n = 1160	n = 224	n = 205
Parents	55	48	37	26	44	43
Villagers/society	20	24	4	6	-	-
Friends	9	13	7	9	1	2
Television	5	5	15	18	9	4
Teachers	2	3	14	17	33	34
Books	2	2	-	-	-	2
Radio	2	1	9*	10*	1	2
Relatives	2	1	3**	2**	5	8
Posters, leaflets	1	1	1	2	-	-
Neighbour	1	1	-	-	-	-
Brothers or sisters	0.4	1	0.2	0.9	1	1
Other IEC materials	1	0.3	0.8	2	3	2
Meena stories	0.3	0.0	1	0.1	1	1
Health Centre/doctor	-	-	1	1	2	2
Meena Club (Orissa)	-	-	1 (n=380)	-	-	-

* the responses for radio varied across the three study states, ranging from 4% (girls) and 2% (boys) in Orissa, to 4% and 7% in Bihar, to 18% and 20% in Uttar Pradesh.

** includes 'neighbours' for this knowledge item

The table indicates parents, villagers/society, teachers, friends and television as the prime reported sources, with Meena stories falling within a group of other sources reported by a very small percentage of respondents. Care is needed in interpreting this finding, as each of the prime sources may have drawn on, been influenced by, or incorporated (in the case of television, for example) Meena materials and messages.

The identification of the prime sources carries implications for decisions about the implementation of the MCI in that helps to highlight key channels by which the Meena messages may be delivered. Conversely,

it helps to identify less effective channels. Such information is critical in planning intervention strategies in both effectiveness and efficiency terms. The findings also reinforce the importance of influencing the knowledge, capacities and attitudes not only of girls but also of the family and community contexts in which they live. This points to the need for multidimensional strategic planning that addresses infrastructural and cultural elements as well as those related directly to communication. In turn, this highlights the significance of cross-programme planning for UNICEF operations.

Which social or age groups were less knowledgeable and why? Are there gender differentials?

The findings on knowledge levels from the Nepal survey, reported earlier in Table 4, reveal generally small differences among girls, boys and mothers. On the eight items for which there were data for all three groups, the highest frequencies were recorded for girls on five items, for mothers on two and for boys on one. Of the ten items for which there are data for children and adults in the Bangladesh study (see Table 5), adults scored higher frequencies than children on eight. For Pakistan, women scored higher frequencies than children on all ten items (see Table 5). The findings reported from the India study on knowledge of the specific areas of dowry and age of marriage indicated a higher frequency of knowledge among girls than among boys on the former but the reverse on the latter. Variations in knowledge levels were also reported for both boys and girls according to their state of residence.

A more detailed analysis of group differences on the knowledge items is provided in the Pakistan study report. In Punjab, male respondents, illiterate respondents and rural respondents were found generally to have low knowledge levels than others. In Sindh, boys were generally found to be the least knowledgeable, with male respondents in general less knowledgeable than female respondents and rural respondents less knowledgeable than urban respondents. The pattern changed in NWFP, with girls, literate respondents and urban respondents recording relatively low levels. In Balochistan, females and literate respondents were identified as less knowledgeable. Across all four provinces, the least knowledgeable groups were identified as household heads and respondents from NWFP.

A number of reasons for the differences in knowledge levels across groups were suggested in the Pakistan report. These included the social environment in NWFP and Balochistan that was serving to restrict female awareness in general; the significant cherishing of custom and tradition in rural areas, as well as in a general sense in NWFP; and a heightened resistance to change associated with age in the case of household heads. The converse to this latter point was shown among the sample of Girl Guides and Boy Scouts, where the level of awareness was reported to be 94%.

The Pakistan data show a higher awareness of Meena among the literate survey respondents (36%) than the illiterate (22%); an increasing level of awareness associated with increasing levels of education (30% for those with up to Primary, rising to 48% for postgraduates); an increasing level associated with age groupings from 12 to 20 (38% for 12-15 year olds compared to 41% for 16-20 year olds, and decreasing thereafter); and a higher level in urban than in rural areas in Sindh, NWFP and Balochistan, but the opposite in Punjab.

The identification of variations in knowledge among groups provides a basis for more targeted and tailored interventions in future implementation of the MCI. This in turn has implications for the potential effectiveness and efficiency of the interventions. In seeking to refine the interventions in this way, due attention will need to be given to the factors underpinning the observed variations. It is attention to these factors that will most assist in extending knowledge levels, rather than just directing more of the interventions at those with least knowledge. The latter is necessary, but not sufficient in itself to achieve the desired results.

3.2.1.3 Life skills practices

In relation to messages communicated by Meena (as contained in the materials disseminated in the respective communities) what practices are seen? Are any of these different for groups who were not exposed to Meena?

The **Nepal** 2002 study reported that 96% of the children who were aware of Meena mentioned at least one behavioural change in their life after watching Meena. The most commonly mentioned changes were –

- Washed hands with soap and/or water (72% of girls, 75% of boys)
- Encouraged siblings to maintain personal hygiene (47% of girls, 36% of boys)
- Attended school regularly (35% of girls, 30% of boys)
- Treated sisters equally (28% of girls, 28% of boys)
- Encouraged siblings to go to school (15% of girls, 12% of boys).

Of the children exposed to Meena, over 94% reported that they were treated equally in their family as a boy or girl, compared to 84% of the children who had not been exposed to Meena.

Household survey data on the extent of specific practices are available from the **Bangladesh** and **India** studies, as shown in Table 7. The extent of practice in each instance varies considerably between the two country study populations. The extent of practice also varies considerably across the range of practices. Nevertheless, the figures reveal a range of practices among respondents that mirror the key Meena

messages. In the India study, from which comparative adult practices data are available, the figures reveal higher reported levels of practices among children than adults.

Table 7 Extent of practice

% of respondents

Bangladesh**India**

	Boys n = 974	Girls n = 1018	Boys n = 279	Girls n = 291	Female adults n = 139	Male adults N = 133
I wash my hands before taking meals	71	68	17	24	6	8
I wash my hands after defecation	65	56	13	16	3	4
I go to school like Meena does	51	54	22	25	n.a	n.a
I wear sandals when going to the latrine	16	12	9	10	5	2
I help to keep the environment clean	15	16	7	14	5	5
I obey elders	11	9	9	9	7	2
I share work load with my brothers and sisters	9	12	7	10	n.a	n.a
I construct sanitary latrines like Meena does	9	6	2	1	2	1
I try to help neighbours and family members	4	9	3	2	4	3
I talk against dowry system like Meena does	3	5	1	4	6	5

The studies showed different levels of practice between groups exposed and not exposed to Meena, as exemplified by findings from the Pakistan study outlined in Table 8.

Table 8 Variations in extent of practice – Pakistan

% of respondents

Practice	Exposed to Meena	Not exposed to Meena
Hand washing with soap and water	80	68
Hand washing before cooking	27	17
Treat water before drinking	32	22
Use latrine	85	78

The impact of Meena on practices, as shown in Table 7, is also reflected in the intentions regarding giving or taking dowry, as declared by girls and women in the Indian study (see Table 9).

Table 9 Responses on knowledge conveyed by the MCI – India - % of respondents

Message	Exposed to Meena		Not exposed to Meena	
	Girls (n = 215)	Women (n = 118*)	Girls (n = 580)	Women (n = 833**)
Will give dowry	15	9	35	27
Will take dowry if given	40	12	41	25

Note: * 77% were already married

** 58% were already married

The studies also revealed the perceived impact on others exposed to Meena, as well as on the respondent. In the Indian study, of 187 child respondents across the three states who said that they knew of others who had been viewing/reading Meena materials, 102 (55%) reported noticing a change. The most commonly reported changes were using their newfound knowledge to teach children, a greater consciousness about cleanliness, and improved capabilities to deal with difficult situations. In the Bangladesh study, of 709 child respondents who said that they knew of others who had been exposed to Meena, 595 (84%) reporting noticing a change. The most commonly reported changes were hand washing before and after meals, interest in extending their education, regular school attendance, washing hands after using latrine, and increased awareness of cleanliness.

The findings provide some evidence of a positive impact on practices associated with exposure to the Meena messages. There are slippages however at both awareness and practice levels. Not all of those who are exposed to the messages are able to recall them, and not all of those who are aware of the messages are seen to be converting them into practice. The nature, extent and significance of these gaps are difficult to identify clearly at this stage. This arises from at least two matters. First, the evaluation being reported here is essentially retrospective. The elapsing of time, in some cases a number of years, has meant that many factors, apart from exposure to the Meena messages, have been operating with potential effect on individuals' awareness and practices. Secondly, it is not clear that planning for implementation of the MCI has always included specific identification of the intended levels of changes in awareness and practice among target audiences associated with any particular intervention.

These two matters point to the need to build ongoing evaluation into the MCI implementation as part of its normal operation, thereby enabling closer and more immediate monitoring of changing levels of awareness and practices. This also carries the advantage of being able to refine implementation processes

during implementation in response to evaluation findings. Such evaluation, as well as subsequent summative evaluation, would also be facilitated by a clear articulation of intended awareness and practice outcomes for the target audience, determined in the light of the needs analysis approach recommended earlier.

What are the reasons for the adoption or non-adoption of behaviour change as intended by the MCI?

The country studies provided a variety of views from participants as to reasons for adoption or non-adoption of the intended change in behaviours. These are outlined below.

The Pakistan study's report on its focus group discussions identified a number of factors mentioned by participants as reasons for non-adoption. The most commonly mentioned were poverty and social norms. Thus, for example,

It is ironic that you are asking those people to send their girls to school who are so poor that they cannot get proper meal even. If they can't educate their sons, how do you expect them to send their girls to school?

The constraining effect of poverty was also raised in discussions in the Nepal study, with the example given of villagers unable to afford to build household toilets. The extent to which such action ran counter to normal practice was also raised as an issue.

The next most commonly identified view in the Pakistan discussions was that Meena was essentially a cartoon series targeting children, whereas it was contended that it is adults who are the key players in attitudinal change and adults were not taking the cartoon stories seriously. In similar vein, the relationship between children and adults was raised as an issue by girls involved in the participatory group discussions in two Islamabad schools. In the words of one of the girls,

I like Meena and I believe in what she says but I can't stand in front of my parents and point out their mistakes. I don't have enough courage.

The reported reaction by adults above does not however diminish the potential impact of the story telling approach of the MCI. Focus group participants indicated that this approach was an effective way of educating and communicating with people. In the words of a community leader from Sindh,

Constructive stories have been used traditionally to give children moral education in our area and it is a time tested way.

Another set of views focused on claims of the Meena messages being counter to local customs and beliefs, and being designed to introduce an alien culture. Thus, for example,

Meena does not fit in the rural setting of our country. The programme aims at destroying our customs and traditions. Girls should be given religious education alone.

Our children are different from Meena and our families look different too, that is why people do not follow her.

A further factor underlying non-adoption of the girls' education message was identified by a focus discussion group of retailers, conducted as part of the Bangladesh study. This was the fear of parents for the security of their daughters traveling to and from school.

Factors that could be added to the above include the extent (duration and intensity) to which individuals are exposed to the MCI messages; the nature and extent of other contemporaneous events and experiences (serving to extend or diminish the potential impact of the MCI); the differential impact of each of the various communication channels used to implement the MCI; and the target group's or individual's perception of the relevance of the messages to their needs and circumstances.

Identification of factors underlying adoption or non-adoption of behaviour change provides another important element of the ongoing evaluation recommended in the preceding section. In effect, it enables the adoption of complementary strategies that focus specifically on enabling the potential of the messages to be realized. These might include, for example, strategies addressing the costs of schooling, access to additional income generating opportunities for families, and more secure travel arrangements for girls. Extending access to the Meena messages among the non-adopters is important, but as was noted in relation to addressing gaps in awareness, it is not sufficient. Implementation of the MCI needs to be part of a comprehensive plan that seeks to address the range of factors that ultimately determine the extent to which the Meena messages can and do translate into changes in practices. One way of doing this is to use Meena as a tool in communicating specific messages within a programme in which other necessary and sufficient conditions for obtaining the defined changes in knowledge and behaviour are ensured.

3.2.1.4 Perceptions of and attitudes towards Meena

Among those exposed to Meena,

What was the level of receptivity to different materials and channels of communication e.g TV, radio, facilitated discussion, videos etc.

Television was the most preferred medium for learning about the Meena issues in the countries studied. The Indian study data identified the most preferred medium as television, followed by radio and story books (see Table 10). There were some differences among the study states. In Bihar, television was overwhelmingly the most preferred medium (73% overall), with story books (35% of children) and street plays (30% of children) also attracting stronger ratings than in the other two states. In Uttar Pradesh, the most preferred medium of television (44% overall) was closely followed by videos (38%) and then radio (31%).

Table 10 Preferred media for learning about Meena – India

% of respondents

Medium	Boys n = 279	Girls n = 291	Female adults n = 139	Male adults n = 133
TV	33	39	22	18
Radio	17	18	10	10
Cartoon books	4	3	3	-
Story books	19	18	7	7
Magazines	2	2	1	-
Posters	2	3	1	1
Songs	1	6	2	1
Videos	11	5	4	2
Street plays	5	11	6	8
Muppet shows	-	1	-	1

The Pakistan data reflected a similar order of preferences in the findings, with television (74% of all respondents) and radio (41% of respondents) emerging as the most preferred media. There was some variation in the preference for television, with 64% of girls and 76% of boys rating this as their most preferred medium. In the Pakistan group discussions, television was the most commonly identified effective medium for Meena propagation (50% of participants). Up to 80% of participants in NWFP and Balochistan expressed the view however that television exposure and face-to-face activities would be a more effective combination. Person-to-person contact was also endorsed as the best way to spread Meena messages by the majority of children in the two school participatory group discussions in Islamabad.

The Bangladesh data highlighted television, with over 90% in each category of child and adult, urban and rural respondent indicating it as their most preferred medium.

These findings on preferred sources complement those reported earlier in regards to actual sources, with television emerging as the prime source in each case. The findings carry implications for the future implementation of the MCI, although care needs to be taken to avoid excluding groups who are not able

to access the identified prime sources on a regular basis. The key message emerging is the need to tailor the means of communication adopted for specific interventions to meet the specific needs and contexts of each component of the identified target groups. This provides another element of the strategic planning endorsed in discussion of the findings in previous sections of this report.

Which materials and means of communication were the more popular?

The relative popularity of the Meena episodes varied to some extent across the region, although the most liked episodes tended to draw from the initial 13 produced. Thus, for example, the five most liked stories reported in the Indian study were, in order, *Count your Chickens*, *Dividing the Mango*, *Will Meena leave School*, *Say No to Dowry* and *I love School*, with slight variations in ratings across the three states. The Bangladesh data revealed the top five as *Count your Chickens*, *Meena's Three Wishes*, *Dividing the Mango*, *Saving a Life*, and *Will Meena leave School*. In the Pakistan study, the top five were *Count your Chickens*, *Dividing the Mango*, *Meena's Three Wishes* (for girls) and *Will Meena leave School* (for boys), *Say No to Dowry*, and *I love School*.

In part, this pattern may be a reflection of the extent to which these episodes have been seen in comparison to later episodes. It should also be kept in mind that many of the respondents were drawing on their recall of Meena episodes to which they were exposed some years ago. Again, this increases the likelihood of the earlier produced episodes scoring more highly in the respondents' ratings.

The relative popularity of the various means of communication has been reported in the material presented for the preceding question.

To what extent was Meena character perceived as a role model?

Meena was perceived by the majority of respondents as their favourite character in the series, being rated as favourite by 86% of Bangladesh survey respondents and 25% in the Indian survey. If participants who did not nominate any character as their favourite are excluded from the Indian survey data, the number nominating Meena, as a percentage of respondents who identified particular characters, is 68%.

Respondents who indicated that they would like to be like Meena comprised 93% of respondents in the Indian study, 70% in the Pakistan study, and 25% in the Bangladesh study (which also featured a 62% non response rate). It was reported that 90% of participants in the Pakistan group discussions believed that children saw Meena as a role model.

These findings are significant in that they confirm the potential power of the main character in the series to influence audiences by virtue of being liked and being someone worth emulating. This is not sufficient to ensure the adoption of like behaviour but it does assist in providing a positive contribution to the range of factors that together are likely to promote behaviour change.

What were the endearing features of Meena character and the other characters?

The most endearing features of Meena, in order of frequency, were identified in the Bangladesh study as intelligent, helpful and brave; in the India study as brave, intelligent and helpful; and in the Pakistan study as brave, kind and helpful. Discussions with stakeholders in India indicated that Meena's self-confidence, courage and eagerness to learn were her most appreciated virtues. The majority of participants (60%) in discussion groups in Pakistan referred to Meena's key qualities as helping others and being brave. As one mother commented,

I want my children to be like Meena because I want them to be bold and self-reliant and lead their lives according to their wishes and not depend on anyone.

The most commonly stated reasons for liking the other characters, as revealed in the Pakistan report, were

–

Mithu	kind, active and helpful
Raju	kind, helpful and brave
Tara	honest, brave and active
Dadi	brave, pretty/cute and kind
Rani	brave and kind

Teacherhelpful and kind.

The features identified by respondents are consistent with the underlying intentions of the series, in that they point to characters who are not victims but rather active in seeking to promote change. The characters are thus conveying not only knowledge messages but also role image messages that can assist audiences to reflect on how they are leading and might lead their lives. This underpins the intentions of the series to influence attitudes as well as understanding in order to promote fundamental change in life practices.

What modifications are needed for better acceptability and memorability of message?

There is a well established process of formative research that underpins development of the Meena materials, as outlined in section 1.1.3 of this report. This process involves detailed field testing of the issues; the underlying local understandings, attitudes, beliefs and values; and local aspirations, constraints and possibilities. The story lines developed in the light of this testing, and their visual representation, are then reviewed in the field to test their entertainment value, comprehension and credibility. This process provides a sound and well tested set of procedures to maximize the relevance and impact of the Meena messages.

The complexity of this process can be illustrated by an example drawn from the focus group discussions in the Pakistan study. From these, it was reported that around 60% of participants, across different groups and provinces, were of the view that Meena looked like an average Pakistani child. A number of participants in Balochistan put the counter view however that Meena and her family did not look like an average Pakistani family, and participants from Sindh wanted the programme to adopt Sindhi culture so that it would be more attractive to them. It was also reported that 95% of participants across all groups indicated that the Meena messages could be more effective if they were directly aligned with Islam. The introduction of a village elder as a source of advice to Meena was also suggested.

A continuing theme emerging from the evaluation is the need to ensure that the messages, materials and means of communication of the MCI are tailored to meet the particular needs and contexts of each sub-audience within the region. This theme provides support for the formative research approach adopted within the MCI, as well as highlighting the need to be continually alert to changing needs and contexts. Recent examples of such changes include increasing urbanization and a growing awareness of HIV/AIDS. Identifying and responding to changing situations will create periods of difficulty, as different and at times conflicting views on message acceptability emerge in countries and communities. The sensitive and political nature of promoting change in life practices provides a major and continuing consideration in efforts to maintain the relevance and potential impact of the MCI. The evidence gathered in the evaluation concerning the production and dissemination of materials on sensitive issues in recent years

points to a high level of advocacy, networking and diplomacy skills among the UNICEF personnel involved. Such skills will continue to be needed in any future production and implementation models adopted for the MCI.

What materials were considered useful and what were actually used? How?

The variations in implementation activities across and within the four countries, as outlined earlier in this report, mean that in turn there has been considerable variation in the extent and nature of use of the material available in the MCI. For conclusions and judgments on the use, nature of use, and usefulness of materials to be meaningful and helpful, they need to be made within particular activity and audience contexts. A specific example drawn from one of the country study reports is reported below to indicate the complexity of issues involved.

Almost all of the participants in the focus group discussions in NWFP, Pakistan, were reported to have heard of or seen the Meena comic books. Both the children and teachers indicated that a set of four books and a poster were given to each child. The children further stated that no discussion was initiated by the teachers on issues raised in the books. A majority of the teachers (60%) confirmed this. The children and mothers were unanimous in their view that the most effective way of using the comic books was to engage students in a discussion of them. Community leaders and teachers however were of the view that there would only be time to discuss the books if they were formally included in the school curriculum. Children and mothers saw this approach as changing a potentially enjoyable reading and discussion exercise into ‘the monotonous and boring routine of regular text books’.

This example indicates that the nature of use and usefulness of materials are influenced by more than their availability. In the example, the realization of the intended use was dependent on teacher beliefs as to appropriate teaching methods, availability of teaching time, teacher capacities to engage students in interactive processes, and the impact of the formally endorsed school curriculum on teacher practices. These factors carry significant implications for teacher training, school curriculum development processes and education department advocacy activities, as part of strategic implementation planning for the MCI. The complexity of promoting changes in lifeskill attitudes and practices in general, mean that virtually any specific set of materials, or intentions as to their use, will carry issues to be addressed that are as problematic as those outlined in the example.

The above conclusions reinforce the need for wide ranging, including cross-programme, strategic planning to realise the potential offered by the Meena materials. Such planning needs to consider all of the variables that will impact on the effectiveness of the MCI, and to incorporate strategies to address

these. Some attention has been given to this to date, as evidenced by the intensive training provided to fieldworkers (see section 1.1.7). Further attention is now needed.

As part of this, consideration might be given to the use of a program logic approach. This focuses on articulating what results are to be achieved, and identifying how and why processes should lead to intended outcomes. In this case, it would entail the conceptualization of a model that maps the progression from the development of the Meena materials through to the various intended outcomes of the MCI, incorporating the range of implementation strategies along the way and identifying the various enabling and inhibiting contextual factors at each point. The essential test lies in being able to articulate the logic at each point of progression, i.e. being able to explain why the particular step of the process is appropriate, efficient and effective, taking into account the operating contextual factors.

How is Meena rated as an entertainment programme compared to other entertainment or educational programmes?

A small minority of child respondents in each of the four country studies was able to identify programmes similar to that of Meena. In the Indian study, 3% of child respondents did so, and of these only one respondent found Meena to be less entertaining. In the Pakistan study, 5% could identify similar programmes, and in the Bangladesh study, the figure was 9% (181 children). Of the 181 respondents in the Bangladesh study, 38% (71) found Meena to be less entertaining, the main reason being given as 'less fun'. The majority of children involved in the Nepal study discussions were reported as preferring the Meena episodes to other programmes because they were educational as well as entertaining.

The attractiveness of the Meena series to its intended audiences needs to be subject to ongoing monitoring. While it may be facing limited direct competition in the form of similar programmes, it needs to maintain sufficient appeal to encourage access by young people. The currency and sustainability of appeal require particular attention as the initiative progresses. The first episode, for example, was produced and field tested in 1992. Some re-testing of materials appeal and relevance may be warranted, with a view to repackaging if needed.

Have stories stimulated interpersonal communication?

The potential impact of the MCI is increased to the extent that those exposed to its messages discuss these with others. The evaluation provided some evidence of this occurring. Thus, in the Indian study, the data indicated that 17% of survey respondents reported having discussed Meena issues with others. The incidence was higher among girls (23%) than among boys (20%), and higher in Bihar (35% overall) and Uttar Pradesh (37% overall) than in Orissa (12% overall). The Pakistan study indicates a similar overall

discussion rate, with 20% reported as having discussed issues with others. A higher incidence was reported in the Bangladesh study, namely 48% overall, with the incidence being higher among girls (50%) than among boys (45%), and higher in urban areas (56%) than in rural areas (44%).

The people with whom the discussions occurred were reported in the Indian study as friends (72%), parents (21%), brother/sister (9%), neighbours (8%) and relatives (7%). The corresponding figures from the Bangladesh study were friends (83%), parents (10%), brother/sister (23%), neighbours (15%) and relatives (4%). The Pakistan study data pointed to friends and brothers and sisters as the most common partners in discussion.

Teachers in the Indian study identified Meena's keenness for learning, girl's education, equal treatment for girls and boys, and cleanliness and hygiene as the main areas of discussion that had been triggered by the Meena stories.

The challenge for the MCI is to increase the extent to which such discussion is occurring. Some steps have been taken to promote this in the form of discussion guides, questions in school textbooks, and the training of field workers to facilitate community discussion. Further consideration is needed as to how these steps might be extended in a range of school, home and community settings. Strategies akin to including discussion guides with videotapes need to be considered for all forms of implementation that are adopted within the MCI. In effect, discussion-promoting strategies need to be considered as a normal and integral part of any implementation package. In turn, this will require specific attention in the initiative's strategic planning and resource allocation processes.

3.2.2 Implementation processes of the MCI

What were the key steps in implementing the initiative from decision to implement to completion or if on going up to current status?

For the research and development stages of the initiative, the key steps have been characterized by information sharing, review and decision-making among regional and country office personnel. As outlined in Section 1.1.4 of this report, these steps have involved determining the topics or issues to be covered, undertaking and reviewing field testing results, and planning and undertaking materials production.

Beyond the research and development stages, decisions on implementation have been largely decentralized to the country offices. This has involved the development of dissemination plans in each country, including planning of collaborative activities with NGO, government and private sector partners.

The decentralization of much of the implementation planning has resulted in considerable variation in the nature, timing and extent of implementation of the MCI across Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal, as outlined in Section 1.1.5. Decisions on the particular steps to take have varied, as each office has considered its priorities, local needs and contexts, and resources. This process has also been affected by the ways in which senior personnel have understood the nature of the MCI and its potential, and the extent to which they have championed its development and use.

A major element influencing the particular steps to be undertaken in any of the countries was that of decisions about scale. These ranged from deciding to begin on a small scale, gradually expanding access in the country to more materials and in more locations, to deciding to wait until a full series of episodes was available for national exposure, as in Pakistan. Again, this was largely a decision taken at country office level.

What were the decision making processes that determined the scope and approaches for implementation?

The key elements of the scope and overall implementation approaches of the MCI were shaped in the initial development years when it was being coordinated through the UNICEF Bangladesh Office. Coordination and decision making at that time drew upon the views, experiences and expectations of key stakeholders, with BRAC and government representatives being involved in concept testing, discussion of emerging issues and ongoing resolution of problems. Decisions on the content focus of the materials were taken in the light of regional priorities identified by UNICEF within the overall MCI context of the needs of the girl child. As noted in Section 1.1.3, decisions on the specific content and artistic features of each package were informed by detailed field research and development activities.

The decisions on specific implementation approaches were, as indicated in the response to the preceding question, largely taken at country office level.

How participatory and owned were these steps?

The direct participation of BRAC and government representatives in the decision making processes for the overall project in the initial years served not only to capitalise on local expertise and insights but also to build shared ownership with key external stakeholders. Paralleling this, internal UNICEF Section stakeholders were involved with the development of joint plans of action involving Meena. As part of the coordination process, continuing efforts were made to ensure that each section was conversant with what was happening in the MCI.

This initial participatory decision making model has not always been fully reflected in the various country level implementation processes adopted after the initial development phases. By its nature, this model tends to be more time demanding and drawn out as the expectations and understandings of the various parties are explored and brought together as a basis for action. Its potential payoff is considerable however, in terms of shared understandings, shared commitment, provision of practical stakeholder support, and generation of goodwill. These potential outcomes signal it as a key component to incorporate in future implementation models and processes adopted for the MCI.

How efficiently were these steps carried out in terms of conforming to planned time lines and coverage?

The planned time lines and coverage varied across the region according to each country's priorities, resources and preferred approaches, within the broad context of the overall approaches and strategies of the MCI. The net result has been a mixed set of strategies and timelines with some coordination from ROSA, keeping in mind the responsibilities of the Country Offices. This largely decentralized model carries both advantages and disadvantages.

The main advantage lies in the potential to tailor implementation plans and strategies to meet the particular needs and contexts of each country. This in turn can assist in developing local ownership of the project, and in enabling more immediate and timely adjustments to implementation in response to changing needs and circumstances.

The main disadvantage lies in the potential for the project to become fragmented across the region, weakening its prime focus and creating the possibility of duplication and overlap in resource use. Particular countries can also be disadvantaged if the required resources and expertise are not spread evenly or made available equitably across the region. In turn, the effectiveness and efficiency of the project can vary considerably from country to country.

Project timelines were also affected by the time taken for training. The main training program put into place for NGO personnel, to develop their capacity to use the Meena materials in the field, was of four to five days duration. The timing of the training was influenced by decisions of the NGOs as to when they could release their people for this purpose. This was particularly difficult for smaller NGOs. This again had an impact on the efficiency of implementation of particular activities within the MCI.

Particular local features have provided another factor influencing timelines and coverage. In Dang district of Nepal's Mid and Far Western Region, for example, the remoteness and relative inaccessibility of some

villages translate into high carrying costs and lengthy traveling times. Each of these has served to delay and limit planned implementation.

While there has been a mixture of strategies and timelines across the region, the history of the MCI, as outlined in section 1.1.5 of the report, reveals a very extensive process of research, development and implementation in the region. Much has been done and much has been achieved with the resources available. The history of the initiative also points to the value of moving to a more proactive and strategically planned set of processes. While there were some clearly laid out steps in the initial years, the innovative nature of the MCI meant that there was a limited stock of corporate knowledge and experience on which to base long-term planning. Some development was of necessity reactive in nature. The MCI has reached a stage of maturity by now however, enabling decision-making to be grounded in the experiences, lessons and insights gained over the last 12 years. Clear guidelines on implementation procedures, similar to those that have been established for research and development of the Meena materials, can be established, accompanied by specific targets, timelines and points of responsibility and accountability within a strategic planning framework. This in turn will provide part of the scaffolding for ongoing evaluation of the MCI.

While there is a need to plan for a wide variety of interventions to tap into the diversity of contexts that exist, this has to be done within a well articulated and agreed results framework which identifies the results which MCI will contribute to in achieving respective project or programme outcomes.

To what extent were capacities developed in UNICEF and among partners for life skills development?

Capacity building has been a continuing feature of the MCI from its inception. The areas covered have included knowledge and skills in field research, materials production and programme implementation.

The capacity building began in 1991, with training being provided for four South Asian artists during production of the pilot Meena episode. In 1992, national research groups were trained in qualitative research methods in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal by Dr Mira Aghi, as part of the field testing of the pilot video and support materials.

The formative research approach adopted for the pilot episode has been further refined and incorporated into a sequenced research and development process, as noted earlier in section 1.1.4 of this report. This process has been used for each of the 24 packages subsequently produced, thereby providing for continuing training and capacity building among UNICEF and local supporting industry personnel. NGO and government department personnel have also been included in the process.

Capacity building has also occurred through the training of field workers across the region in relation to the issues addressed by the MCI and procedures for facilitating discussion of these issues using Meena as an entry point. As noted in section 1.1.7, this training has been provided via structured TOT workshops, covering aspects such as MCI concepts and objectives, using Meena materials at community level, understanding life skills concepts and how life skills may be acquired through Meena, strengthening linkages and networks with partners, and developing dissemination plans. People trained in the workshops have in turn trained others in their organizations. For example, as noted in the outline of the MCI in India (section 1.1.5), the training of about 200 trainers from Anganwadi Workers Training Centres in 1999 led to their training 18,000 Anganwadi Workers to facilitate community discussions on girl child issues.

Finally, capacity building has occurred through the provision of workshops for NGOs, government authorities and professional groups, as part of the advocacy focus of the MCI.

The movement of people with expertise and experience in the MCI has had some impact on capacity building. It was noted by a UNICEF official that progress of the MCI had been slowed at times, particularly in the early years of the initiative, as UNICEF staff with background in the MCI moved to other countries outside of South Asia. It was noted however that this had occurred at a much diminished rate in recent years. Movement had also occurred for NGO personnel trained in MCI implementation. The UNICEF official commented however that many of these people moved to other NGOs in the country/region and thus their capacities had not been lost.

The capacity building outlined above is a critical factor in planning for long term sustainability of the MCI. It has a multi-pronged effect in that it promotes shared understanding of the MCI and its intentions and shared commitment to its effective implementation, as well as developing a critical mass of skilled resources in the form of research, development and implementation personnel. Accessing and maintaining both the capacity building processes and the pool of skilled resources provide challenges for sustainability planning.

An essential part of such planning is to identify the range of skills required for the effective and efficient ongoing development and implementation of the MCI. This range would include skills in research, development, production, marketing, dissemination, management, advocacy, monitoring and evaluation. Some of these, such as skills in research, dissemination and advocacy, have featured in the capacity building experienced thus far, as outlined above. Others are not as readily identifiable, particularly those in marketing, management, monitoring and evaluation. Planning accordingly needs to include not only

strategies for maintaining and extending current capacities, but also strategies for developing and/or outsourcing capacities that currently are in limited supply within the implementation agencies.

Are there cases of multiplication/ replication after the introductory phases and if so what is the nature and extent?

Multiplication and replication of MCI interventions was noted by participants in the evaluation to have occurred in a number of ways. These included, for example,

- re-broadcasting of Meena episodes and series on television and radio;
- dubbing or translating audio, video and film materials into local languages;
- re-printing of materials for dissemination to new audiences;
- re-packaging of video material to include puppets, girl players, games, songs and traditions;
- Meena Clubs in Orissa using Meena in various programmes such as tobacco awareness programmes, organizing events for World Disability Day and public sanitation projects.
- extension of the *Brothers Join Meena* project in Pakistan from Balochistan into Sindh and Punjab.

It was noted that in some locations, not as many interventions have been needed as other programs with similar messages have already been in place. It was also noted that for the MCI to be effective, there had to be multiple interventions for each audience in order to gradually develop understanding of the messages and to reinforce them.

Multiplication and replication provide a potentially important component of planning for further development and sustainability of the MCI, for a number of reasons. First, they provide access to materials and processes of known and tested quality. Secondly, they enable implementation to occur in the light of lessons learned from the previous experiences. Thirdly, they represent a relatively low cost option in that much of the research and development costs have already been met.

In seeking to gain the advantages offered by multiplication and replication, it will be necessary however to check the degree of fit with the newly intended audience's needs and contexts. What was appropriate and effective for one audience may not necessarily be so for a different audience in a different location at a different time. The importance of undertaking a needs assessment process for each intervention remains as an essential component of any implementation planning.

It will also be important to disseminate details of interventions across the region so that each country, and each implementing agency within the countries, is aware of the range of options available. This implies

the establishment of an effective communication system through which details of specific interventions, their contexts and their effects, may be provided.

What factors facilitated the implementation and how?

Discussions with stakeholders during the course of the evaluation, along with details derived from review of documentation on the project, indicate that the dedicated commitment of key players in the UNICEF regional and country Offices, and in a number of partner organizations, has played a critical role in facilitating the implementation of the MCI. These individuals' belief in, and passion for the project has helped to maintain its momentum and ensure its expansion, despite short-term setbacks and localized periods of relative inactivity. The role of co-ordinators, at regional and country/local levels, and of country and regional representatives with particular interest in the MCI, has been especially important in championing and energizing the project.

For UNICEF, this factor carries workforce planning implications, in terms of identifying, supporting and providing development opportunities for key internal personnel with a view to their leading future MCI operations, or elements of these, to the extent that such operations are retained within the organization.

Implementation has also been facilitated by the inherent appeal of the product. The Meena materials have generally been very well received across a number of quite different contexts in the region, and beyond. This is in no small part due to the rigorous and systematic research and development processes undertaken as integral components of the initiative.

Further planning is needed to ensure that the product appeal is not lost for future audiences. This implies a continuing needs assessment, research and development process, to ensure continuing appropriateness and effectiveness.

What factors constrained the implementation as planned and how?

A number of factors serving to constrain implementation of the MCI were identified in the course of the evaluation. These included -

- Gaps in UNICEF internal organizational awareness of Meena, implying a need for an extension of internal marketing. Instances were cited of some people in the organization having very little, if any, knowledge of the MCI and of its potential impact. This was instanced as occurring at both individual office and within country levels. As an extension of this, it was also noted that at times there was limited learning and application of learning from the experiences of one country, by personnel in another. This, it was observed, may have contributed to the different levels and

timing of activity implementation across the region. Related to this was the view that the effectiveness of implementation could be extended with greater integration of the Meena messages and materials across UNICEF programmes. In the words of a UNICEF official,

Meena has not been used even within UNICEF programmes sufficiently. Besides, even when we have occasionally used it...we have not documented the contribution of the Meena package...As a result, the use of Meena in UNICEF programmes is not reflected.

- Shortage of funds. The substantial contributions by external donors from 1992 to 2003 were a major enabling factor for the MCI, especially in relation to the research and production aspects, but also for much of its implementation. The extent to which implementation activities have been able to continue and expand has been constrained however by the extent to which ongoing funding is available. Lack of funds has been identified, for example, as a major factor in the cessation of the Meena Muppet Shows in the Indian state of Bihar. Finding alternative and ongoing sources of funding is a key issue in any planning for MCI sustainability.
- Limits on availability of Meena materials for disbursement. A particular example cited was that of the *Brothers Join Meena* Project in Pakistan. While this has been gradually spreading, first in Balochistan and now into Sindh and Punjab, the sustainability of its expansion was noted as depending on the availability of materials (as well as funds) on a timely basis.
- Non-availability of materials in some local languages. This is of particular concern in India, with 13 major languages and over 200 languages in total, plus local dialects. Meena has been translated or dubbed into the 13 major languages at this stage. Availability of human resources and finance to develop Meena materials into other languages provide a major challenge in seeking to extend the MCI's reach in this country.
- Local security problems. In Nepal, for example, security issues had meant that some areas were no longer accessible for MCI implementation.
- Poor transport facilities in some rural areas. An example cited was that of the Tanahun district in the Western Region of Nepal, where for some villages the only access is by foot. This limits the extent to which activities requiring materials and equipment can take place.
- Limited physical infrastructure in some rural areas. Lack of electricity and indoor space for groups, for example, were identified in Sunsari and Nawalparasi districts in Nepal as constraints on activities such as showing and discussing Meena videos.

The factors outlined above provide clear examples of matters that can serve to reduce the effectiveness of intended change in knowledge, understanding, capacities and practices. A reading of the research on such change suggests three conditions serving to influence the extent to which the change will be successfully implemented. First, there needs to be shared understanding of the change and its intentions and implications among those potentially involved in its implementation. Secondly, there needs to be shared commitment to the change among these parties. Thirdly, there needs to be sufficient and appropriate resourcing to enable the change to be implemented.

The constraining factors that have been identified point in the first instance to gaps in awareness and understanding of the MCI within the implementing offices. Such gaps inevitably reduce the extent to which shared commitment to the MCI has been and can be developed. As noted in the previous section, implementation has been advantaged by the commitment and dedication of a number of key players. The contribution of these people is vital but the extent to which their efforts are producing results is limited by the lack of awareness on the part of others and the associated gaps in cross-programme implementation. This is not to suggest that the MCI should necessarily be a major, or even minor, component of every programme. The contention is rather that it needs to be considered in terms of what contribution it could make, in the light of detailed awareness and understanding of its nature, intentions and history of implementation. As indicated above, this points to a need for an extension of internal marketing, and a re-examination of the means available within the regional and country offices to record and disseminate the details and experiences of the initiative.

The third condition relating to resourcing also comes into play. Donor funding for the MCI has been substantial and has played a critical part in bringing the initiative to its current stage. Despite this, limits on resources have served to limit the supply of materials and the introduction and continuation of specific activities. Resource limits have applied not only in relation to funding but also in terms of human and infrastructure resources. Strategic planning for the MCI will need to address each of these elements of resourcing, particularly now that the major external donor funding period has drawn to a close.

3.2.3 Costs

What were the costs involved and how do they compare with achieved results in terms of outcomes?

Each of the country evaluation teams experienced some difficulty in identifying the full spectrum of costs associated with the MCI. This is not surprising, given that the MCI in various forms and locations dates back to 1991. Various financial recording systems have been in place over that period, and the categories and procedures within these have not necessarily corresponded with the cost information ideally required

for this evaluation. The extended time period since the MCI began also means that some information is no longer available or is held deep within archived data.

Summary cost figures that were supplied to the country teams are as follows -

- Bangladesh - figures not available at time of report.
- India - US\$789,370 in the period 1990-2003, of which most (about 90%) was spent between 1995 and 2003. In this latter period, the expenditure comprised materials production and dissemination (61%), advocacy (26%), capacity building (11%), emoluments (1%) and pre-testing (1%).
- Nepal - \$US450,235 in the period 2000-2003, comprising orientation (63%), materials production (14%), SSA (13%), airing (6%), project support (4%) and miscellaneous (1%).
- Pakistan - \$US 521,999 in the period 1999-2003 (not including some radio, closed circuit television and television costs in 2000). The major components of the expenditure were materials production (42%) and assistance to the *Brothers Join Meena* project from 2000 to 2002 (41%). Other costs included payment to PTV (7%), equipment (3%), and transport and distribution (1%).

In the absence of a complete and detailed cost breakdown, the project's funding figures can provide a useful indication of aggregate costs, at least in terms of the MCI expenditures that drew on these funds. The funding figure may however underestimate the full costs, to the extent that some costs may have been absorbed by other budgets, for example, in the case of UNICEF country office personnel undertaking aspects of MCI implementation as part of their mainstream responsibilities, or in the case of NGOs bearing some of the costs of MCI activities.

Total funding for the MCI from 1992 to October 2002, including some funding targeted for use in 2004-2005, has been estimated as \$US7,837,255. A breakdown of this is indicated in Table 11.¹⁹

Table 11 Funding of the MCI

Funding period	Source	Amount (US\$)	Use of funds
1992-1994	Government of Norway	1,339,600	Research, production and field testing of first 8 packages Initial dissemination of materials in 5 regional languages
1992-1994	Country Offices	1,000,000 (est)	Initial implementation
1992-1995	Bangladesh Country Office	700,000	Research, training and dissemination

1997-2001	UK NatCom	145,871	Production (inc. Radio series) 115, 648 Implementation 13,319 Advocacy, institutionalization 16,904
1998-2001	Netherlands NatCom	97,087	Advocacy/launch 24,344 Implementation 49,561 Production 18,093 Evaluation 3,000 Office supplies, administration 2,089
1999-2001	Government of Norway	2,670,588	Production 257,345 approx. Implementation (4 core countries) 1,742,407 Salaries/operation/admin. and office supplies, equipment, assessment studies, consultation on institutionalization, advocacy and promotional activities 670,836 approx.
2000-2002	Finland NatCom	59,122	Production 57,279 Printing 1,475 Administration etc 368
2000-2004	Government of Norway	1,747,463	Production 101,759 (est. for 2002) Implementation and sustainability issues 34,954 Salaries/administration etc
2001-2003	US NatCom	9,524	Implementation 9,509
2002-2005	UK NatCom	68,000	Implementation in India (language versions)
Total		\$7,837,255	

Given the incomplete nature of the cost figures available, it is not possible to draw meaningful conclusions relating costs to outcomes. It is clear that, as might be expected, significant amounts were spent on materials production in the initial expansion stages of the MCI. To the extent that the initial research and development outcomes can be embedded in future materials and activity development, materials production costs might be expected to diminish in relative terms as further development and implementation take place. This may also be assisted by the adoption of more efficient technologies in materials production.

This expectation is supported to some extent by the figures in Table 11. Excluding the initial grant from the Government of Norway that focused heavily on production, an analysis of the funding from 1992 to 2003 indicates the major cost category to be implementation (approximately 70%), followed by administration (16%) and production (11%).

The relationship of costs to outcomes is a prime consideration in strategic planning for the ongoing development and implementation of the MCI. The lesson to be drawn from the current evaluation is that of the need to establish clear guidelines for the reporting of cost details, on an annual basis, for the initiative at both country and regional levels. This will provide a critical element of the informed basis on which to make decisions, as well as providing an element of accountability and data for ongoing evaluation of the MCI.

3.2.4 Potential for expansion and sustainability

What are the examples where the initiative has been replicated/multiplied by partners or others such as media organisations?

The focus on mass dissemination and long term sustainability in Phase Three of the initiative has led to a series of negotiations with existing and potential partners. These have centred on extending access of target audiences to Meena materials and activities. Some progress has been made in this regard. Thus, for example, a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with the Turner Cartoon Network to enable the Meena film series to be shown across Asia. A three year contract has been signed with the Macmillan publishing company to print, market and distribute Meena materials in India. A partnership with the Asian Cricket Corporation is being negotiated to promote girls' education through the *Fair Play for Girls* campaign.

Positive indications of the possibility of further arrangements were gained in discussions with senior media representatives in the course of the evaluation. The Deputy Director General of Bangladesh Betar (radio), for example, indicated that he is willing to re-broadcast the Meena radio series if officially requested by UNICEF.

The present arrangements have at times been problematic. The India MCI Evaluation Report indicates, for example, that the 'number of approvals and formalities demanded for every initiative has taken a toll on the enthusiasm and morale of the team at MacMillan. On the other hand, the ICO points out that MacMillan has not delivered on its promise of finding sponsors for the Meena material²⁰. Such issues need to be worked through, given the expressed need for the MCI to become largely self supporting. Commercial partnerships do need to be fostered, and this requires the negotiation of feasible and realistic expectations and responsibilities on the part of all parties to the partnerships.

What is the scope for expansion and what are the potential modalities in terms of communication approaches, partners etc for such expansion?

There is scope for further expansion of the MCI. The findings of the evaluation indicate that the animated cartoons and stories are attractive and well received, and that the MCI is having a positive impact where and when it is implemented. Its reach has not been universal in the region, and its potential target audiences are increasing each year as populations grow. New issues relating to girls' rights are also emerging, warranting attention to production of new materials.

The information gathered for the evaluation provides support for the overall approach adopted by the MCI. It also lends support to the provision of a range of specific activities and communication channels within the overall approach, tailored to local needs and contexts, but with particular support for an increased emphasis on television and interactive activities.

The evaluation findings also endorse the critical role of NGO, government, community and private sector partners in enabling the effective development and implementation of the MCI.

In making decisions about the nature and extent of expansion, communication approaches and partners, a number of issues need to be considered and addressed. These include –

- Ensuring that the key intended Meena messages are maintained. The attractiveness of Meena to current and potential partners lies largely in her capacity to assist in selling their messages and products. Care needs to be taken not to diffuse the MCI focus by attaching Meena to a wide range of other messages, however positive they may be. Decisions accordingly need to be made as to the scope of messages and products to which Meena should be attached. Allied to this is the need to develop a monitoring and compliance system to ensure that the agreed scope is maintained.
- Ensuring that the artistic and production standards are maintained in any production of new materials. This in large part depends on the availability of people with appropriate skills for each aspect of the development and production process. The experience of the MCI to date indicates that this expertise is not in huge supply and not necessarily available in individual NGOs or other partner bodies. Accordingly, there may need to be periods of transition in which assistance is given to partners to build skill sets, and/or models of partnership in which expertise is accessed from a variety of sources within and beyond the partner organizations. Again, there is a case for developing a monitoring and compliance system to ensure that the standards are maintained.
- Ensuring that the activities and modes of communication are appropriate in relation to the specific needs, characteristics and contexts of its various target groups. This requires a focus on needs

assessment, undertaken by means such as the formative research process used in the MCI to date, which in turn depends on the availability of people with appropriate skills. The comments made in the previous paragraph about the lack of appropriate expertise apply equally in this instance.

The matters raised above are further explored in Section 4.4, *Future Directions for the Meena Communication Initiative*.

What lessons can be learnt from implementation that was successful and what were the commonalities of efforts that failed, if any?

A number of lessons can be learnt from the understandings of the MCI implementation emerging in this evaluation.

First, it is very important to have knowledgeable, passionate and articulate advocates to guide and promote specific implementation activities. Such people need to be identified, supported, encouraged and affirmed by the organization and its senior personnel.

Secondly, the particular implementation activities need to be clearly customised to meet the specific needs, characteristics and contexts of the identified target audiences. This implies close attention to needs assessment processes and field testing in advance of full scale implementation. It also implies the incorporation of an ongoing monitoring and evaluation process to check on level of fit during implementation, and having the flexibility and willingness to make changes in a timely manner where appropriate.

Thirdly, attention needs to be given to the contextual factors that influence the extent to which the target audience can act on the Meena messages. This essentially implies that Meena normally be seen as part of an integrated package, or as a tool within a programme, rather than as a complete programme in itself. Thus, for example, encouragement to attend school needs to be matched by activities focusing on providing school places, teacher training, funding or subsidizing schooling expenses for families, travel security, and the like.

Fourthly, the Meena messages need to be reinforced, as far as possible, by being carefully and purposefully integrated across a number of UNICEF, NGO and government department programmes, rather than provided in a one-off activity or at irregular intervals in an unconnected fashion. This in turn indicates the need for a detailed strategic implementation planning process.

What are some of the suggestions that have emerged from the evaluation in terms of alternative ways in which Meena could be used for promoting the rights of children and women?

A range of suggestions were made by participants in the evaluation. These included the following -

- Dub episodes in tribal languages.
- Extend the use of existing community facilities to distribute Meena material and to disseminate Meena messages. For example, the Chief Slum Development Officer in Dhaka indicated that the 100 Urban Development Centres in Dhaka, each serving 10,000 people in slum areas, could be used for distributing Meena materials and information.
- Use different formats in locations where they are not already used. Examples suggested were puppets, shadow plays, folk drama and folk songs.
- Examine new communication tools and use their potential to spread Meena messages.
- Extend the reach beyond sporadic exposure.
- Promote the development of Meena Clubs in schools to view and discuss the Meena videos.
- Incorporate more interactive elements, such as post episode quizzes, in radio and television programming.
- Develop an integrated media strategy, with increased emphasis on television and radio, as part of a strategic media plan.
- Integrate the MCI into state and national UNICEF and government programmes.
- Extend advocacy activities to gain increased commitment and action from government, NGO and other partners.

The suggestions vary in terms of their nature and level of application. Some, such as the first two, relate to a local level of application and potential effect. Others, such as the last two, are at a state or national level, with the potential for impact across the spectrum of MCI interventions. Each suggestion carries costs - financial, human resource and organizational. The strategic planning suggested throughout this chapter would need to consider both of these elements – potential impact and cost – in determining the extent to which such suggestions could and should be pursued and their timing.

Chapter 4 Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Summary of findings

The outline of the development and implementation of the MCI in Chapter 1 reveals the complexity of an initiative that is intended to meet a wide range of contextual features and needs across many countries, while maintaining its core messages and objectives. While it is labeled as the MCI, the reality is that it comprises a multitude of linked variants, each of which has been changing over time as well as facing changes in its audiences.

Within this complexity, four teams sought to evaluate the particular versions of the initiative within Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal. This report has attempted to provide a regional synthesis of the findings from these country level evaluations in terms of findings and insights that might help to inform ongoing decision-making about the MCI. It is recognized that the findings drawn from the country level evaluations cannot be definitive, given such factors as the lack of baseline data from which to measure change, the difficulty of attribution of observed change to any one specific factor or intervention, and the need to rely primarily on perceptions of change as distinct from direct measures of change. The evaluation of communication initiatives is in itself a problematic endeavour.

Allowing for these limitations and qualifications, the findings do provide some relatively clear indications of the outcomes and processes of the MCI, the key factors that have helped and constrained its implementation, and the issues that need to be addressed in ongoing planning for its expansion and sustainability.

The key findings of the evaluation in relation to each of the key question categories are summarized below. These are followed by a series of conclusions drawn from the findings.

Outcomes

The reach of the MCI has varied over time and according to the nature of the specific intervention. At one level, the screening of Meena episodes on national television in each of the four countries, complemented by radio broadcasts, has created potentially nation-wide audiences (subject to the population's accessibility to these media in each country). A more intensive reach has been achieved through the specific interventions aimed at particular target groups and/or geographical areas, as outlined in section 1.1.6 of the report.

Television emerged as the most commonly reported source of exposure to Meena. The findings also indicated, however, that the contexts of the target audiences need to be closely considered when seeking to determine relative effectiveness of alternative sources for particular groups.

The levels of reported knowledge of key Meena messages among the evaluation's participants varied across the region and between specific groups, as might be expected from the variations in implementation. The findings pointed to the potential effectiveness of the MCI to convey knowledge and promote awareness, as evidenced by cases of high recall. They also revealed instances of apparent ineffectiveness, as revealed in low recall. These findings highlighted the need to clearly identify target audiences and their needs and contexts, as well as to provide for a sustained set of interventions for each audience. Factors underpinning variations between groups require specific research and attention.

Findings on sources of knowledge revealed the significance of parents, villagers/society, teachers, friends and television. This in turn carries implications for decisions about channels and targets for message delivery. It also points to the need for multidimensional strategic planning that addresses infrastructural and cultural elements as well as those related directly to communication, and highlights the significance of cross-programme planning.

The evaluation revealed evidence of changes in practices that mirrored the Meena messages, with indications that the changes were occurring more among children exposed to Meena than among those not exposed to Meena. It also revealed some slippage between ability to recall and conversion into practice.

Reasons listed for non-adoption of practices included poverty, social norms, the role of adults in attitudinal change among children, local customs and beliefs, and security concerns for girls traveling to school. These highlight the importance of adopting complementary strategies that focus specifically on enabling the potential of the messages to be realized.

The most preferred medium for learning about the Meena issues was found to be television, with some variations in particular localities and groups. The key message emerging here was the need to tailor the means of communication in specific interventions to meet the specific needs and contexts of each component of the identified target groups. The most liked Meena episodes tended to be drawn from the initial series. The character of Meena was generally well liked and seen as a role model, her key qualities being seen as brave, intelligent and helpful.

In examining the issue of modifications for better acceptability and memorability of message, the importance of the formative research approach was endorsed. The potential usefulness of materials was seen to depend on a range of activity and audience context factors. These were seen as reinforcing the need for wide ranging, including cross-programme, strategic planning to realise the potential offered by the Meena materials. As part of this, it was recommended that consideration be given to the use of a program logic approach.

Very few respondents could identify programmes similar to that of Meena, and where examples were identified, they were generally regarded less highly than the Meena episodes. Ongoing evaluation of the appeal of Meena to the target audiences is required however, particularly in light of the time that has elapsed since the earlier materials were field tested and produced.

The evaluation indicated evidence of the Meena stories stimulating discussion with other people, more often among girls than boys, and most commonly with friends and family members. The challenge now is to increase the extent to which such discussion is occurring, in a range of school, home and community settings.

Implementation of the MCI

For the research and development stages of the initiative, the key steps were found to have been characterized by information sharing, review and decision-making among regional and country office personnel. Beyond these stages, decisions on implementation were largely decentralized to country offices. A major outcome of this was the occurrence of variation across the countries in the scale, nature and timing of implementation activity. The efficiency of implementation in turn varied, being affected by factors such as differential access to resources and expertise, availability of training participants, and accessibility of target audiences. These experiences point to the value of moving to a more proactive and strategically planned set of processes. Clear guidelines on implementation procedures, similar to those that have been established for research and development of the Meena materials, can now be established,

accompanied by specific targets, timelines and points of responsibility and accountability within a strategic planning framework.

Capacity building has been a feature of the MCI, specifically in research, dissemination and advocacy. This has not been as apparent in relation to marketing, management, monitoring and evaluation. Planning accordingly needs to include not only strategies for maintaining and extending current capacities, but also strategies for developing and/or outsourcing capacities that currently are in limited supply within the implementation agencies.

Multiplication and replication has been a feature of the implementation process, with examples listed in the report. The value of this is confirmed, subject to an assessment of the degree of fit with the newly intended audience's needs and contexts. The importance of disseminating details of interventions across the region so that each country, and each implementing agency within the countries, is aware of the range of options available, has also been noted. This implies the establishment of an effective communication system through which details of specific interventions, their contexts and their effects, may be provided.

Key factors facilitating implementation have been identified as the dedicated commitment of key players within and outside of UNICEF, and the inherent appeal of the product, due in large part to its underpinning research and development processes. Supporting key players and establishing mechanisms to ensure continuing product appeal will be essential components of future operations.

Constraining factors have also been identified, including gaps in UNICEF organizational awareness and application of the MCI, shortage of funds, limits on availability of materials, non-availability of materials in some local languages, and local security, transport and infrastructure problems. An extension of internal marketing, re-examination of the means available within the regional and country offices to record and disseminate the details and experiences of the initiative, and attention to human and infrastructure resource funding in ongoing strategic planning are recommended as a response to these.

Costs

Detailed cost figures from the beginning of the MCI in 1991 could not be accessed by the evaluation teams. The project's funding of around \$US8 million, the bulk of this coming from external donors, provides an alternative indication of aggregate costs. A significant proportion of this was spent on materials production in the initial expansion stages of the MCI. This proportion might be expected to fall in future implementation of the MCI, in view of the embedding of initial research and development investment expenditure and the adoption of more efficient technologies. There is a need to establish clear

and agreed guidelines for the reporting of cost details, on an annual basis, for the initiative at both country and regional levels.

Potential for expansion and sustainability

As Phase Three has progressed, negotiations have been undertaken with media partners, and some agreements reached, as part of the focus on mass dissemination and sustainability. These have at times been problematic, but provide an essential element of future development. Scope exists for further expansion of the MCI, given its positive outcomes, its un-reached or partially reached audiences, and newly emerging issues relating to girls' rights. The further development of partnerships should play an important role in this, subject to consideration of a number of issues. These include retaining the key Meena messages and intentions, maintaining artistic and production standards, and ensuring that the initiative addresses the specific needs, characteristics and contexts of its various target groups.

Key lessons learnt from the MCI implementation stress the importance of advocates, customising implementation for specific target audiences, simultaneous action on contextual enabling factors, and strategic planning to ensure that Meena activities are part of an overall set of integrated and ongoing strategies and programmes.

Participants in the evaluation have provided some specific suggestions as to alternative ways in which Meena could be used to promote the rights of women and children, as listed in the report. Each suggestion carries costs - financial, human resource and organizational. The strategic planning suggested throughout this chapter would need to consider both of these elements – potential impact and cost – in determining the extent to which such suggestions could and should be pursued and their timing.

4.2 Overall conclusions

The findings in the evaluation confirm the potential of the MCI to communicate children's rights, particularly girls' rights, to South Asian audiences, and in so doing, to create awareness, promote acquisition of life skills, and encourage change in life skills practices. Achievements in each of these dimensions have been demonstrated. The extent to which the potential in each of these dimensions is realized has been seen however to depend on a range of implementation, audience and contextual factors. Each of these needs to be recognized and addressed for the MCI to achieve its intentions in any given situation. The evaluation findings have also indicated that the potential of the MCI, and its effects, will be heightened to the extent that it is integrated into related programmes undertaken by UNICEF,

governments and NGOs, with the Meena materials and activities being seen as a tool in these programmes rather than as a separate programme per se.

This in turn indicates the need for detailed strategic planning that covers both the MCI and the programme contexts in which it is used as a tool. For this to occur, further internal marketing of the MCI is needed within the country offices in order to extend awareness of its potential for use in mainstream programmes. Similar efforts need to be continued and intensified with government departments and NGOs, to heighten awareness of how Meena materials and messages can be used as an integral tool within their own programmes. Each of these should assist in promoting sustainability in that they serve to institutionalize Meena within currently supported programmes rather than as a separate set of activities that need continuing dedicated funding support. The strategic planning should also help to promote a continuing and sustained pattern of implementation that is needed to achieve maximum effect.

4.3 Future directions for the Meena Communication Initiative

The conclusions drawn from the evaluation above point to a number of key factors that underpin the potential effectiveness of the MCI and the extent to which this effectiveness can be achieved. Linked to this is the need for organizational structures that will enable these factors to be addressed and for the initiative's sustainability to be assured. Such structures need to be consistent with UNICEF's roles and operating procedures, feasible within a context of zero or minimal external donor funding, and sufficiently attractive to provide incentives for partners to be involved. Underpinning all of these is the need to maintain the credibility and integrity of the Meena messages and materials.

As indicated in Section 1.1.5, discussions on the sustainability of the MCI have been ongoing since 1995, with a number of models being suggested. A common theme of these has been the establishment of one or more foundations, connected to but largely operating outside of UNICEF, with NGOs playing a central role. Critical issues that have been identified include availability of required skills (research, creative, development, production, marketing, dissemination, management, monitoring and evaluation); ownership and copyright of intellectual property and materials; development and maintenance of standards; the specific roles of UNICEF and other partners; generation of funding; and balancing local, national and regional needs and priorities.

Discussions with senior UNICEF officials during the course of the evaluation yielded a number of possibilities. These are brought together in the following description for continuing consideration.

- Establish two national Foundations, one in Bangladesh and one in India, with responsibility for day-to-day operation handled in each case by a large NGO or private sector partner. In the case

of Bangladesh, BRAC has been suggested as the most likely key player to be invited, whereas in India the suggestion has centred on a large retail chain with interests in print and other media materials. The incentive for the operating partners would be the opportunity to produce and market Meena materials and related merchandise. This incentive would be enhanced by the incorporation of Meena materials into school curricula and other national systems. The two Foundations could be established simultaneously, or one could be established as a trial and the other at a later date, depending on the outcomes of the trial.

- Establish a Board in each case to oversee operations, to set future directions, and to engage in strategic planning, with UNICEF having one or more Board representatives.
- Provide licences for the Foundations to be able to use the Meena name, existing materials and other intellectual property for a specified time period, subject to renewal options.
- Empower the Foundations to research, develop and produce new Meena materials, subject to undertaking formative research processes akin to those adopted to date.
- For a set initial period, supplement the expertise residing in the partner organization by seconded UNICEF personnel and/or intensive training for partner employees.
- Establish sets of standards for the operation, one set focusing on ethical issues (such as the range of messages to be conveyed via Meena and accessibility to Meena products), and the other focusing on artistic and production standards.
- Institute periodic assessments of performance against the standards, the assessments to be undertaken independently by an internationally recognized body with expertise in the appropriate fields.
- Retain the right for UNICEF to intervene if the assessments indicated non-compliance with the standards.

It is anticipated that each Foundation would focus on its own national market, but also provide access to its products to other countries. Some local country adaptations would be required in the case of Pakistan, Nepal, and other countries in the region. It is anticipated that this would be undertaken by regional and/or country office personnel. Depending on the success of the Foundations, one or both of these could extend into a multi-country or regional mode of operation in future years.

In such a model, the role of UNICEF would center on advocacy, training, advice to the Boards, monitoring and evaluation. Underpinning these aspects would be the production of a range of facilitating materials such as training modules, activity guidelines and case studies, advocacy packages, evaluation checklists, and toolkits. In the light of the evaluation challenges encountered in this current exercise, it is suggested that a series of performance indicators be established to facilitate ongoing evaluation of the initiative. UNICEF would continue its own strategic planning, with a view to marketing the MCI internally and promoting its integration across UNICEF programmes. While the MCI would appear to have particular relevance to goals such as primary education for all by 2015, the need to address enabling contextual factors, as outlined earlier, provides the imperative to plan for its integration on a cross-programme basis.

4.4 Recommendations

In the light of the findings and conclusions outlined in the report, the following recommendations are presented for consideration. The related sections of the report are indicated after each recommendation.

1. That a process of proactive design evaluation be undertaken for future MCI interventions to enable clear identification of target audiences and their specific needs; articulation of intended awareness and practice outcomes for each audience; selection of appropriate means of communication in terms of audience access, capacity to use and receptivity; and assessment of possible intervention overlaps, disjunctions and complementarities.
(3.2.1.1) (3.2.1.2) (3.2.1.3) (3.2.1.4)
2. That a program logic approach be used as a means of articulating the intended outcomes and selecting appropriate means of communication for each audience. (3.2.1.4)
3. That implementation planning for the MCI be of a multidimensional strategic nature that addresses infrastructural and cultural elements as well as those related directly to communication.
(3.2.1.2) (3.2.1.3)
4. That internal and external marketing of the MCI be extended and intensified among UNICEF, government department and NGO personnel, to heighten awareness of how Meena materials and messages can be used as an integral and effective tool within and across their various programmes.
(3.2.1.2) (3.2.1.4) (3.2.2)
5. That increased attention be given to multiplication and replication opportunities within the MCI, subject to close assessment of the degree of fit with newly intended audiences' needs and contexts. (3.2.2)
6. That guidelines on implementation procedures, similar to those that have been established for research and development of the Meena materials, be established, accompanied by specific targets, timelines, and points of responsibility and accountability within a strategic planning framework. (3.2.2)
7. That the use of a participatory decision making model be extended in country level implementation processes for the MCI. (3.2.2)

8. That strategies to promote discussion of Meena messages by target audiences be extended, and that such strategies be considered as a normal and integral part of any MCI implementation package. (3.2.1.4)
9. That in developing additional or modified MCI materials, the existing research and development process be maintained. (3.2.2)
10. That ongoing evaluation be built into MCI implementation, to enable continuing assessment of the appeal of the Meena series to its intended audiences, closer monitoring of outcomes, and refinement of processes during implementation where warranted. (3.2.1.3) (3.2.1.4)
11. That strategies be developed for maintaining and extending current capacities in relation to the range of skills underpinning effective and efficient development and implementation of the MCI, using professional development and/or outsourcing processes as required. (3.2.2)
12. That the UNICEF offices identify, affirm, support and provide development opportunities for key internal personnel committed to the MCI with a view to their leading future MCI operations, or elements of these, to the extent that such operations are retained within the organization. (3.2.2)
13. That clear guidelines be developed for the reporting of cost details of the MCI, on an annual basis, at both country and regional levels. (3.2.2)
14. That consideration be given to the adoption of the model outlined for the future operation of the MCI, as per the details provided in section 4.3 of this report. (4.3)

Footnotes

1. UNICEF (2004)
2. Carnegie, R. (undated), p.19
3. UNICEF-ROSA (2003), Annex 3, pp.14-15
4. Shahzadi, N. (2002), pp.57-58
5. Shahzadi, N. (2003), pp.16-17
6. Shahzadi, N. (2001), p.3

7. Shahzadi, N. (2001), p.3
8. Carnegie, R. (undated), pp.43-46
9. Shahzadi, N. and Carnegie, R. (2002), p.5
10. Shahzadi, N. (2001), p.31
11. Shahzadi, N. (2003), p.32
12. Shahzadi, N. (2001), p.3-4
13. Shahzadi, N. (2002), p.2
14. Shahzadi, N. and Carnegie, R. (2002), pp 2-3
15. Institute of Sociology (2003), p.39
16. Aghi, M.B., (1995); Carnegie, R. and Shahzardi (2001), p.8
17. Centre for Media Studies (2004), p.8
18. Population Reference Bureau (2004)
19. Shahzadi, N. and Carnegie, R. (2002)
20. Centre for Media Studies (2004), p.143

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United Nations Children's Fund, Regional Office for South Asia

EVALUATION of the MEENA COMMUNICATION INITIATIVE

Terms of Reference for the Regional Synthesis

1. Background

This Terms of Reference is to be read in conjunction with the attached Terms of reference for the country consultants for evaluating the Meena Communication Initiative (MCI) in South Asia focussing on four countries, namely India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. The Terms of Reference for the country evaluations provide a description of the MCI and of the scope and methodologies of the country level examination. This Terms of Reference is for providing technical guidance to the country evaluations and preparing a regional synthesis.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this part of the evaluation is to provide technical guidance to country studies and to synthesise the findings from the individual country evaluations in order to distil the lessons that emerge from the evaluations in the countries.

The evaluation will inform the decisions on next steps of MCI particularly for enhancing the relevance, cost efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of the Meena Communication Initiative both from a regional and country perspective.

3. Scope and focus

The evaluation will review the findings with respect to the evaluation questions addressed in each of the four countries as reported in the respective evaluation reports.

The findings will be synthesized with respect to

- outcomes

- efficiency
- costs
- sustainability.

4. Information sources

The following will be the key information sources.

- “Meeting Meena – Documentation Study on Utilisation of Meena Communications Initiative”
2001 UNICEF regional office for South Asia
- Reports (including drafts) of country level evaluations
- Results of document review prepared by country evaluation teams.
- Documentary records of procedures and processes available in the Regional Office.

Other sources will be found as the work progresses.

5. Evaluation methods and Process

The evaluation draws primarily from existing data and documents. It does not envisage any primary quantitative data collection. The synthesis of country level evaluation findings will be based on the country level evaluation reports. These will be supplemented where necessary by in depth discussions with key informants from the Regional office and the country evaluation teams.

6. Accountabilities

The Planning Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) section in ROSA in collaboration with the Communication section will be responsible for approving the final research design and draft reports and facilitating access to available documents and other information.

The principal evaluator will be responsible for

- Reviewing and providing inputs to the country level evaluation designs, both quantitative and particularly qualitative, and survey instruments and analysis plans;
- Review draft country evaluation reports

- Prepare synthesis report

7. Qualifications

The regional evaluator could be an individual or an institution. She/he must be a senior level evaluator with significant experience in carrying out evaluations of communication and social mobilisation campaigns. She/he must be familiar with current literature on programme evaluation standards, with evaluation of social development programmes in complex, multi-partner settings comparable to those in which UNICEF works and must have excellent written communication skills in English. An advanced post graduate degree in social sciences, evaluation, or statistics is needed.

7. Procedures and logistics

The regional evaluator will work from his own working place to review the draft methodologies and reports etc. He or she will visit one or more country offices to observe and assist the implementation. He or she will visit the regional office for a total period of three to four weeks on two occasions, once during the finalisation of the country level evaluation designs and instruments and again to synthesize the findings and prepare the synthesis report.. The regional and country visits will be coordinated to optimise costs. The number of visits and durations can be negotiated to best suit the study needs and the consultants availability.

8. Products

The final product is a evaluation report on the findings of the evaluation presenting a synthesis of the analytical questions addressed in the country level evaluations and documenting the lessons learnt, and where possible indicating future directions to strengthen the Meena Communication Initiative.

The final report should be printer ready. It should be provided in hard-copy (1 copy) and electronic version in Microsoft Word 6. UNICEF will provide a style guide.

All electronic files will be submitted on a CD.

All data and information collected will be the property of UNICEF ROSA and may not be used for any purpose other than the present study.

Budget

A lump sum fee to be negotiated, travel, and DSA during travel is payable. Please indicate the expected fee.

Applications

All applicants must provide in electronic format (Microsoft Word) a curriculum vitae and full contact details of at least three references from among recent employers/clients.

Please send applications to:

Regional Human Resource Officer
UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia
PO Box 5815, Lekhnath Marg,
Kathmandu, Nepal
E-mail: rgulati@unicef.org

UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia

Annex 1: Work calendar

The following is a tentative calendar to be reviewed with the consultant.

Key tasks	Period
Review country level evaluation methodologies, survey instruments and procedures etc.	Nov 2003
Prepare detailed report outline and conduct document review and in-depth interviews with Meena staff	Nov - Dec 2003
Prepare draft report on the basis of desk review interviews and preliminary findings from country studies	Dec – Jan 2004
Final report submitted	15 Feb 2004

