SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNED FROM 2012
Working Paper

Summary

This paper has been prepared in response to the Executive Board decision 2011/12 where the Board requested UNICEF, to share lessons learned and recommendations for future strategies of the organization, and to include descriptions of challenges and concrete steps taken to address them. The paper focuses on the lessons learned which are multi-sectoral and cross-cutting. The lessons learned on specific Focus Areas can be found in the respective annual thematic reports.

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[Accompanying video interviews to be made available via UNICEF Television.]
I. Introduction

1. The 2013 annual session of the UNICEF Executive Board provides a strategic opportunity to reflect on what UNICEF has learned in 2012 to improve children’s rights, equity and development progress around the world. The lessons learned are representative of a broad range of work across regions. While sector specific examples are included, the focus of this conference report is on lessons learned that are a cross-cutting or multi-sectoral in nature. The report is intended to be read alongside the 2012 Executive Director’s Annual Report, which provides a summary of the results achieved in 2012. Thematic reports for each of the five focus areas listed in the 2006-2013 UNICEF Medium Term Strategic Plan provide additional sectoral examples.1

II. Programme context

2. The UNICEF programming environment is changing. More children than ever are surviving their early years, thanks to emergency interventions, the delivery of life-saving vaccines, nutrition and health care, greater educational opportunities, and stronger protection and promotion of rights for children. Comprehensive data and evidence are contributing to better programme delivery, while technology and innovation are strengthening accountability and efficiency. However, critical gaps remain. Inequality is increasing in some countries. A large number of children under five still die every day from preventable causes. Nutrition and food insecurity continue to be key concerns, and quality education remains out of reach for many. Rapid social, political and economic change is adding to child protection challenges. Children living in fragile, conflict-ridden environments are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, violence and abuse.

3. In 2012, UNICEF continued to adjust to the rapidly changing programme environment by scaling-up proven programme interventions in the core areas of UNICEF’s work, strengthening capacities in areas that remain weak, and testing new systems and innovations. Some approaches have been more effective than others, but all demonstrate UNICEF’s effort to strengthen the use of evidence in guiding programme design and policy implementation, to empower local communities and to bolster national capacity to advance the rights of all children across the globe.

III. Lessons learned from 2012 programming

A. Prioritizing the most vulnerable through data and evidence

Monitoring Results for Equity System (MoRES)

4. Reaching the most disadvantaged and excluded children and women is central to UNICEF’s mission, and an explicit focus in the next Strategic Plan, 2014-2017. This has taken on new momentum with the Monitoring Results for Equity (MoRES) systems initiative, rolled out in 2012, which prioritizes the generation and analysis of disaggregated and subnational evidence to inform real-time adjustments to programmes and policies to improve results for the most disadvantaged children.

1 MTSP focus areas include: 1) young child survival and development; 2) basic education and gender equality; 3) HIV/AIDS and children; 4) child protection from violence, exploitation and abuse; and 5) policy advocacy and partnerships for children’s rights.
5. MoRES promotes more frequent monitoring of results and highlights the fact that there are critical conditions or determinants which either constrain or enable the achievement of results for particular groups of children. It entails supporting planning, programming, implementation, monitoring and analyses of results. It has been reconfirmed that enhancing the quality and comprehensiveness of the analysis of the situation of children is critical to evidence-based programming. This should include the identification of bottlenecks and barriers for achieving results, and more frequent monitoring to inform strategic adjustments to programme and policy interventions. Evidence from twenty-seven pilot initiatives suggests that the MoRES approach has been effective in helping countries to improve policies and systems and to better target interventions that improve results for marginalized communities.

6. Country Offices have been pragmatic in implementing the MoRES approach, focusing on organizing, collecting and analysing data based on national systems. For example, in Indonesia, where the government has sophisticated data collection systems and planning processes, UNICEF is using the MoRES framework to build the investment case for programme convergence targeting disadvantaged populations. Experience implementing subnational monitoring in the Philippines and Lao PDR show the benefit of supporting innovative ways to strengthen subnational monitoring. In such cases, it has been possible to collaborate with partners in the field to use simple tools for data collection and monitoring. UNICEF can also draw on the work of other partners that have strong data collection and evaluation skills.

7. The importance of analyzing and communicating subnational information so that it is relevant for national planning has been reconfirmed in many contexts. Ongoing dialogue with the government and partners has been essential to promote effective coordination in removing bottlenecks and barriers for children. Building on UNICEF’s comparative advantage with regards to other partners has proven important. For example, in Indonesia, UNICEF is one of few UN agencies with an extensive field presence, providing a unique comparative advantage to provide ongoing support to monitoring systems.

8. Investing in internal capacity, especially on data analysis and communication for development, has been key to implementing MoRES. UNICEF Lao PDR adopted a ‘whole office approach’ to access and analyze data, with weekly training sessions to improve staff data literacy. Linking workplans to Google Earth helped to visually monitor UNICEF’s subnational engagement and support equity planning. The Lao PDR office is using regular field monitoring processes, including trip reports, and innovative methods such as short message service (SMS) and harmonised approach to cash transfers (HACT) to gather evidence to inform national and subnational planning. Several offices have re-evaluated the roles and responsibilities of staff – especially planning, monitoring, evaluation, and communication — to be able to contribute to MoRES processes.

Other evidence-based approaches

9. Information and communication technology (ICT) based approaches have been effective in facilitating real-time monitoring and reporting. UNICEF Rwanda has institutionalized the use of bottleneck analysis and rapid data collection on child health through the use of a nationwide Rapid SMS system to improve antenatal care delivery at the village level. UNICEF Nigeria and Tanzania have used SMS to conduct bottleneck analyses on birth registration. The use of SMS technology in Zambia, Malawi and Uganda have contributed to reduced delays in receiving early infant diagnosis and HIV test results;
improved communication among health care providers and community volunteers; and encouraged patients to return to the clinic for their test results with greater confidence.

10. ICT has also helped to strengthen accountability mechanisms. EduTrac, a mobile education platform in Uganda, provides districts with a tool to identify bottlenecks at school level; facilitate tracking of accountability for resolution of issues arising from EduTrac reports; and improve planning for education. uReport in Uganda uses SMS to poll young people on their perspectives regarding access and quality of community services and youth issues. The youth, partners and the Government receive results and useful facts for action. uReport has provided a useful entry-point for youth to engage in decision-making processes.

11. Research and surveys have strengthened the evidence base on the patterns and causes of inequity. For example, a Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children has provided UNICEF, partners and governments with evidence on cross-sectoral barriers and bottlenecks to education. The fourth round of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, completed in 2012, produced groundbreaking information on the global status of young children’s development. Data is being used to design quality programmes that address some of the known factors that contribute to inequities in access and discrimination for girls and boys. Modeling initiatives such as Marginal Budgeting for Bottlenecks and the Simulations for Equity in Education have served as important planning and budgeting tools to enhance equity in health and education systems. A similar tool has been developed to analyze bottlenecks in, and increase resources for, the Water, Sanitation and Health (WASH) sector. UNICEF has also supported the development of a toolkit on ending mother to child transmission of HIV (eMTCT) to support and facilitate evidence-based planning processes at the national and sub-national levels.

12. New methods have been tested to strengthen the identification and monitoring vulnerability and poverty. UNICEF Guatemala developed an "Inter-Municipal Equity Index on Children and Adolescents" to detect equity gaps in key areas of development for children and adolescence across municipalities. Standard indicators enabled municipalities to compare equity gaps at the departmental, national and regional level. The index has been used for national and municipal planning and to focus public resources to close equity gaps in a multi-sectoral manner. UNICEF’s Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MoDA) has been useful in assessing the linkages between bottlenecks and barriers, and the depth and intensity of multiple and overlapping deprivations on children in Iraq, Cambodia and Swaziland. UNICEF Egypt used the MODA approach to conduct a child poverty analysis in urban informal settlements. Data was used to develop programme strategies that addressed poverty and deprivation among children in peri-urban areas – an emerging focus area for UNICEF.

13. Decentralized approaches to monitoring through traditional and innovative survey methodologies have proved useful for collecting data on hard-to-reach populations. In Nicaragua, UNICEF supported the use of the Lot Quality Assurance Standards methodology to collect data among indigenous people living in remote areas of Nicaragua. Local authorities adapted the survey methodology to fit the cultural context. The survey methodology is now considered as a strategic tool for needs-based planning and budgeting. The Reaching Every District and Soum strategy in Mongolia is supporting the government in planning the delivery of basic health and social services to hard-to-reach target groups. The strategy has enabled better identification and registration of poor families, unemployment, food security and housing issues, which have directly contributed to improved health among the poor.
14. Limitations in the quality of routine data present significant challenges for frequent monitoring and reporting. In many countries, the capacity of partners at both central and local level to conduct research and collect, interpret and use data needs to be strengthened. Data is often outdated or unreliable due to the use of inaccurate testing and recording mechanisms, or is for limited distribution. Greater attention is needed on strengthening national and subnational capacity to generate and use data obtained through regular monitoring systems.

15. While rapid household surveys, field visit reports, rapid SMS and other qualitative methods are often effective methodologies for generating data, they also magnify the importance of data quality and usability. Monitoring results and change over time is challenging by the fact that in some cases, the most disadvantaged children live in remote and difficult to access locations. Traditional data collection methodologies may also miss children living outside of households – those in institutions, in detention centres, engaged in the worst forms of child labour or living on the street. Data collection and monitoring requires multiple methods, which in turn requires a range of skillsets and resources, reinforcing the need for national as well as internal capacity building. Predictable resources are critical to building sustainable and systemic capacity and providing on-going technical support. Placing technical experts within the government as part of capacity building has proven to be an effective strategy in some contexts for strengthening institutional capacity.

16. Evidence reinforces the need for monitoring systems to be simple and cost effective – including when indicators for monitoring certain issues are not part of routine monitoring systems. A key consideration and lesson has been that monitoring approaches and information systems need to be appropriate for each context specific and integrated within existing monitoring and information systems. The importance of this was exemplified in Nigeria, where strategic engagement with all concerned at the early stage of introducing and implementing the RapidSMS initiative to monitor birth registration proved critical in securing active participation and involvement of registrars and managers in applying the determinant analysis. The Government is engaged in follow up activities including development of decentralized monitoring framework and action plans.

17. UNICEF is building on these lessons to revise policy and programme guidance to include the latest lessons on equity-based approaches to monitoring and analysis, particularly related to MoRES. A series of MoRES-related tools, resources and briefing documents have been developed to support the implementation of the approach as well as clarify synergies and linkages to other approaches. Incorporating the programming principles of equity and MoRES into United Nations Development Group (UNDG) standard operating procedures will also provide an opportunity for further collaboration.

B. Influencing equity-based programmes and policies

18. Equity programming implies working on the issues that underlying context-specific disparities; identify strategic entry-point; and support the removal of barriers and bottlenecks for the most disadvantaged children in partnership with others. Yet these issues are often the most sensitive. UNICEF employed a number of strategies to support equity-based programmes and policies in 2012. These included strengthening community capacity building and technical engagement, generating evidence through pilots and research, supporting the scaling-up of proven initiatives and policy advocacy.
Capacity building and technical support

19. Targeted technical support has helped develop the capacities and enabling environment needed to strengthen delivery of supplies and services; guarantee key rights, promote behaviour change and demand for services; and strengthen the ability of rights-holders to claim their rights. Particular focus has been on strengthening government planning and management capacity. UNICEF in Honduras supported the strengthening of the management capacity through the introduction of a tool to analyze bottlenecks in education management; while UNICEF Macedonia supported the development of a multi-level integrated health programme information and management system to modernize Maternal and Child Health (MCH) programing. Support to pilot a national indicator system in five regions in China helped to strengthen the availability of data on enrolment rates in early education and basic education. South Africa created a dashboard to support data driven planning and monitoring to accelerate progress towards the elimination of new HIV infections in children by 2015.

20. UNICEF promoted community participation in programming and planning across all programmes as a means to build capacity and empower communities to address barriers to development. For example, the involvement of community leaders in HIV counseling and testing services in Nicaragua proved instrumental in removing social barriers and structural bottlenecks to the utilization of HIV counseling and testing among pregnant women. In Bulgaria, a mobile integrated social-health community service programme helped to improve young child wellbeing and prevent abandonment and neglect in marginalized communities. The services included training and support to address reproductive health issues, family planning, and traditional harmful practices.

21. Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approaches have proven successful in empowering communities to improve sanitation conditions. Lessons implementing CLTS in South Sudan, Pakistan and Indonesia show the power of positive motivation – promoting respect, dignity and pride – to inspire broad community action.

22. Internal and external reviews reveal the need for more systematic, strategic and coordinated approaches to organizational and partner capacity building. This includes engaging in the full spectrum of capacity building – from assessing initial capacity needs and gaps to monitoring and reporting of actual capacity development. Initiatives are often scattered and implemented as stand-alone trainings, without a comprehensive approach to sustained learning and systemic changes. Capacity building needs to continue to become more comprehensive, including to a systems perspective that recognizes the dynamics and connections among various actors and issues at different levels as part of a broader approach to social change.

Taking pilots to scale

23. One of UNICEF’s strengths is in bridging evidence from pilots with policy making and bringing initiatives to scale. In Nepal, UNICEF supported a two-pronged strategic approach to scale-up community-based management of acute malnutrition (CMAM) to 50 of the most affected districts as part of the government’s health Sector-Wide Approach and Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan. The approach included demonstration of feasibility, cost-effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of CMAM in selected pilot districts; and support to include CMAM in national policy.
24. UNICEF offices tested a range of innovative strategies and approaches for encouraging multi-stakeholder participation, especially targeting young populations. The Kosovo Innovations Lab encourages youth participation and professional development through innovative project designs on issues that directly impact their lives. It includes a mentorship programme, offering grants and guidance to youth participants with an approved project idea to make a difference in their communities; a Youth Advocacy Platform which links youth with consultants and experts; and a Design Centre that leverages technical expertise towards making Kosovo an open-source technology hub for the region. In Brazil, UNICEF facilitated youth-led monitoring approaches to assess secondary public education in the most deprived rural areas. Under the UNICEF Municipal Seal of Approval initiative, adolescents in 1,799 municipalities monitored and assessed the impact of municipal policies addressing child and adolescent rights.

24. While piloting is essential to test innovations in programming, there is a need to define criteria to plan for and better predict the likelihood of innovations going to scale. UNICEF India Country Office’s “Guidelines on Piloting and Scaling up Innovations and Good Practices” provides an approach for reviewing and evaluating interventions for possible replication and scaling up. The guidelines establish common language and definitions and a framework for assessing the potential for successful piloting and scaling up. They also include guidance on monitoring and reporting of results and delivering impact at scale. For example, lessons show that initiatives must be embraced by local authorities and national governments, incorporated into routine planning processes, and supported with sufficient technical capacity. Other enabling factors include ensuring the ‘evaluability’ of pilots at the planning phase, ensuring adequate budget to implement pilots as planned, developing indicators and baselines to monitor results and impact, and document success and failures for shared learning and innovation.

Research and policy advocacy

25. Encouraging citizen involvement in policy decisions and promoting accountability for results continue to be prioritized as part of UNICEF’s work in 2012. UNICEF supported decision makers to help shape national systems development to better protect and support the most vulnerable and marginalized children. For example, in 2012, human trafficking laws were developed or passed in countries including Belize, Bolivia, Cambodia, Maldives and Papua New Guinea. In Malawi, UNICEF supported the Government to use the development process of the revised Malawi Growth and Development Strategy as an opportunity to raise the profile of child protection and influence the shape of the strategy. This laid the foundation for a new approach to child protection in the country. In Viet Nam, a comprehensive review of the legal framework led to revisions of the laws on domestic violence, adoption, people with disabilities, human trafficking, health insurance, medical examination and treatment, food safety and marketing as well as the Labour Code.

26. Experience demonstrates the need to build policy on a solid foundation of analytic work and evidence. UNICEF supported research in Cambodia has helped leverage investments in social services at scale. The Estimation of Rates of Return of Social Protection Instruments’ study in Cambodia provides evidence on the link between government spending, social protection and child welfare, economic growth and inequality through econometric analysis of national-level data. The Government of Cambodia has used the evidence to reinvigorate a national Social Protection strategy. Cutting-edge research on
nutrition and WASH contributed to the development of integrated nutrition-WASH programmes to address the diarrhoea-malnutrition cycle in Nepal and DPR Korea; WASH and deworming interventions in schools to reduce stunting in India, the Philippines and Uzbekistan; and launching the comprehensive “WASH-in-Nutrition” strategy in Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Mali, Burkina, Mauritania, Cameroun, Senegal and Gambia.

27. UNICEF support to budgeting and social protection has contributed to an increase in national resources for key sectors. In East Asia and the Pacific, UNICEF succeeded in partnering with Ministries of Finance to put “quality investments in children” at the centre of policy dialogue. In Latin America, to promote child-responsive budgeting and civil engagements in budget processes, the UNICEF regional office set up an online tool with information on budgets, presenting government expenditure, social expenditure and investment in children. In the Congo, UNICEF’s high-level advocacy efforts contributed to an increase in allocations for health and education.

28. Social protection efforts have also provided a useful platform for multi-sectoral programming, linking social welfare, child protection, early childhood development, health and education. Chile and Colombia have used social protection as an umbrella for early childhood development, education, nutrition and health. China has established a comprehensive social protection scheme that includes cash transfers to the poor, social insurance, and fee waivers education and health services. Kazakhstan is piloting the integration of conditional and targeted cash transfer programmes in antenatal and postnatal care as an incentive to motivate compliance with antenatal care or vaccine schedules.

29. A common bottleneck to policy reform is the complexity of decision-making processes. Often more than one ministry or agency has jurisdiction over an issue. In the case of Ukraine, the reform of Ukraine’s social protection sector has resulted in UNICEF engaging both the Ministry of Social Policy and the Ministry of Finance. Specific advocacy efforts have been developed for each Ministry. Undertaking a political economy analysis is crucial to understanding the complexities of the policy and programme environment. Equally important is determining whether policies are having the right affect. Social audit approaches such as Child Rights Based Social Audits, Public Expenditure Tracking surveys, Citizen Report Cards and Community Score Cards, and Sustainability Checks (in WASH) have proven to be useful tools, particularly for the poor and most marginalized communities, to provide feedback on the effectiveness of policies, governance of service delivery and overall accountability mechanisms.

C. Strengthening Gender Equality in UNICEF programmes

30. Gender equality is integral to UNICEF programming both as a normative principle and as a core element of the refocus on equity. Gender inequality exacerbates the multiple deprivations that not only girls but all children face due to disadvantages such as poverty, ethnicity or disability status. While UNICEF continued to address gender equity issues through programme interventions and strengthened engagement with government and partners, the visibility of gender equality and gender mainstreaming as a programme priority needs to be explicitly stated in programme documents and in the reporting of results. A seventh consecutive quality review of Country Programme Documents (CPDs) conducted as part of an Executive Board requirement to monitor the 2006-2013 MTSP revealed that just over half of the CPDs assessed met the key performance indicator on gender mainstreaming.
31. UNICEF is redoubling efforts to strengthening gender sensitive programming, monitoring and reporting. For example, gender equality serves as a core element of the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan. Both gender-relevant and gender-transformative indicators at outcome and output levels are included in the results matrix of each of the seven outcome areas in the new Strategic Plan. In implementing the Strategic Plan, UNICEF will emphasize the importance of gender equality by systematically tracking the individual and consolidated achievement of these results, and documenting lessons learned.

D. Strengthening humanitarian action and resilience

32. Large-scale emergencies have highlighted the urgent need to invest in building the capacities of UNICEF personnel to respond to all types of emergencies, and the need for stronger inter-agency coordination. This lesson was apparent during the rapid expansion in emergency programming in Mali. UNICEF originally did not have a field office in the north of Mali. UNICEF initiated a process of remote programming, working in collaboration with partners in this area of the country. Remote programming required scaling up partnership cooperation agreements with partners.

33. Lessons from UNICEF’s first activation of the Level 3 Corporate Emergency Activation procedures for the Horn of Africa demonstrated the need to ensure sufficient communication capacity on the ground at the onset of an emergency and for UNICEF to establish direct and ongoing engagement with partners, authorities and local media from the outset. Based on these lessons, Mali will implement an improved engagement strategy with local media in 2013 with renewed explanation of how UNICEF is applying humanitarian principles with other humanitarian actors.

34. Due diligence has been central to reducing risks and promoting best practice. Strengthening internal and external monitoring and evaluation capacity and systems has also proved essential, particularly given the increased frequency of reporting for humanitarian performance monitoring. UNICEF in Mali ensured that all partners included dedicated monitoring and evaluation capacity in their programme cooperation agreements. The use of field monitoring through Third Party Monitoring organizations has provided a crucial mechanism for monitoring and supporting the oversight of programme implementation.

35. Emergency contexts can provide a critical ‘window of opportunity’ to demonstrate feasibility, increase demand and harness government and public will towards improving the situation of the most vulnerable women and children. In Pakistan, UNICEF worked closely with UNFPA, the Punjab Provincial Government health authorities and a private mobile telecommunications company to develop emergency obstetric and neo-natal care services in under-served districts in Punjab in response to the 2010 floods. Data generated during the post-emergency recovery period on the cost effectiveness of the programme for reaching the poorest communities proved instrumental in transitioning the programme from an emergency response into sector wide planning, public budgeting and public services.

36. Support has been provided to implement innovative programme approaches to bridge the gap between coordination of emergencies and longer term development activities. UNICEF supported the Government of Kenya in integrating the cluster approach within the government’s existing emergency response structure. The humanitarian situation in Syria has required UNICEF in Jordan to considerably expand in terms of human and financial resources. The Office has maintained its capacity to respond to increased humanitarian needs,
while ensuring the linkages to current programmes and paving the way to recovery. The
decentralization of health and nutrition interventions at the community level in vulnerable
areas in Ethiopia and Kenya proved critical for reducing the impact of the 2011–2012
drought in those countries.

37. Experience from Jordan and Mali demonstrate the importance of ensuring that
national staff are engaged in security plans, including procedures, systems and back up for
national staff to safely undertake and manage programming in the absence of internationals.
National staff must be fully prepared and trained to manage programme operations securely
and efficiently. Ensuring emergency telecoms capacity building is also essential. UNICEF
training of field ICT staff and rapid access to services and equipment contributed to the
effective provision of ICT services in emergencies in the Sahel and Syria.

38. Building on these lessons, UNICEF has initiated a process to improve organizational
performance in large-scale emergencies, focusing specifically on developing more
streamlined management structures with clear accountabilities; faster deployment of
experienced staff; improving monitoring of humanitarian performance; strengthening
information management; increasing investments in humanitarian training for staff; and
simplifying business processes for faster administrative and financial transactions. UNICEF
is also integrating humanitarian action within its regular programmes to respond more
effectively to acute humanitarian crises and better link humanitarian response with
development programmes to build resilience and promote rapid recovery and transition.

E. Promoting strategic partnerships to advance policies for children

39. UNICEF’s leadership has provided significant support and to mobilize global and
regional partnership aimed at promoting child well-being and development. Examples
include A Promise Renewed, Scaling Up Nutrition, the Global Partnership for Education,
Countdown to 2015, Partnership on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, UN Commission
on Life-Saving Commodities for Women and Children, GAVI, UN Water, Prevention of
Parent to Child Transmission of HIV, and Malaria 2012. UNICEF contributed leadership in a
number of strategically important global and regional mechanisms. These included in
particular the QCPR and Rio+20 processes. Both processes were instrumental in
strengthening UN Coherence across countries. Country Offices are using the collective
impetus of these initiatives to leverage government commitments to accelerate policies and
actions for the most disadvantaged.

40. In 2012, UNICEF advanced innovative partnerships with public and private actors to
develop knowledge and attract common technical resources. The Policy Action Knowledge
Hub on Child rights in South Africa, comprised of researchers, policy-makers and UN
agencies and led by South Africa’s Human Science Research Council, provides high-quality,
timely information to policy makers on various aspects of child wellbeing. The initiative
serves as an innovative example of how UNICEF can contribute to positive change through
the generation and timely dissemination of policy-related knowledge. ‘Together for Girls’
brings together five UN agencies, the U.S. Government, and the private sector to analyse the
intersection between child protection, gender based violence, HIV/AIDS and violence
prevention. Findings have mobilized policy makers in the four countries to develop and
implement coordinated national responses to strengthen child protection systems and
incorporate violence prevention and response measures into key sectors.
Although the benefits of partnerships are clear, they require significant investment of time and commitment. Collaboration with other organizations and agencies in the context of differing working modalities and mechanisms necessitate compromise and adaptation that can delay the achievement of results. In 2012, UNICEF undertook a review of the implementation of its framework for strategic partnerships and collaborative relationships (E/ICEF/2009/10), taking into account trends, experiences and lessons learned. The review (E/ICEF/2012/18) was presented to the second regular session of the UNICEF Executive Board in 2012. The framework outlines three priority approaches for effective partnerships: (a) framing the contribution of partnerships to results; (b) investing strategically in multi-stakeholder partnerships; and (c) strengthening organizational capacity for effective partnering by adopting a systematic approach to the management of partnerships. A series of partnership profiles from across the world were developed to illustrate results and lessons learned. These lessons have been integrated in UNICEF’s approach to strategic partnerships and have also informed the development of the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan.

F. Strengthening partnerships with the private sector

Middle income countries offer UNICEF significant potential for leveraging the private sector in terms of promoting corporate social responsibility. To advance best business practice toward children, UNICEF is leading a process to guide companies on children’s rights in the workplace, marketplace, and community through adoption of the Children’s Rights and Business Principles. UNICEF has also developed an innovative Child Rights Checklist tool for businesses to evaluate corporate practices and management systems as they relate to child rights. UNICEF is also supporting the Committee on the Rights of the Child in the drafting a General Comment on child rights and the business sector, which will be the first document of its kind. The General Comment includes practical guidance on measures to respect and protect child rights, including policy, legislation, and regulation as well as measures to raise awareness, promote good practice and collaboration. Experience piloting the Checklist with companies in Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo have shown that too often business understanding of child rights issues is limited to child labour. While this is an important concern, the Principles and the Checklist promote a more comprehensive approach calling on business to consider all of their impacts across the workplace, marketplace, community and environment. They also encourage business to consider not just the impacts of their own activities but also that of their relationships with suppliers, communities and local governments.

Middle income countries also offer UNICEF significant potential for leveraging private sector funding. In 2012 total private sector income exceeded the planned target and much of it comprised individual donations. UNICEF supported National Committees in the development of integrated digital plans to better employ digital media for fundraising activity. A set of five toolkits were developed and rolled out to help facilitate digital knowledge-sharing and best practice across UNICEF markets. In the East Asia and Pacific region, UNICEF has launched an initiative to influence policy related to extractive industries, exploring the potential to use the revenue from the extractive industries to enhance investments for children.

The potential to leverage resources for children is likely to grow as more countries move towards middle income status. A 2012 analysis of lessons learned in private sector engagement in middle income countries concluded that where there is high potential for mobilizing domestic private sector resources for the global organization, the function should
be recognized as one of UNICEF’s core roles. To create an enabling environment for programmes, leveraging of resources, communication and fundraising, and to maximize the synergies between these, significant changes are required in the accountabilities, structures, processes, systems and staffing profiles of offices. A review of UNICEF’s fundraising performance recommended that UNICEF invest in priority areas of income growth; invest selectively in high-potential areas; and consolidate an integrated portfolio approach to corporate engagement. Improving and innovating around core business practices and priorities is often more sustainable in terms of impact and approach than initiating new methodologies. Alliances with the private sector require due diligence and strong risk mitigation strategies, and long-term efforts to maintain and strengthen relationships and commitments to children’s issues.

**G. Resource mobilization**

45. UNICEF continued to strengthen donor relations and the quality and accessibility in reporting, broaden the donor base, and provided field support to enhance resource mobilization throughout UNICEF. UNICEF continued positioning the organization as a strategic partner for donors through consultations and dialogue, strategically coordinating the organization’s participation in donor assessments, facilitating high-level visits of UNICEF senior management to donor capitals, and creating and harmonizing external communication advocacy tools and products. Due to decentralized funding and fundraising done throughout UNICEF, there is a need for strong coordination with donor interlocutors and partners to ensure coherent messaging and approaches. Donor visibility and addressing demand for direct attribution of results to donor contributions continue as important issues.

46. Several new Multi-Donor Trust Funds have been established or are in the process of being established – Timor-Leste, Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, Sierra Leone, Secretary-General’s Fund for the Cholera Initiative in Haiti. UNICEF has initiated a lessons learned exercise to ensure the organization is prepared to respond to such new opportunities in the future. A new Cooperation Agreement signed between National Committees and UNICEF reinforces the foundations of these unique strategic relationships and includes parameters for strengthening governance, providing the basis for engagement with the private sector, articulating the role of National Committees in child rights advocacy in their countries and reinforcing the Joint Strategic Planning process between UNICEF and National Committees.

**H. Enhancing knowledge and exchange through South-South and Triangular cooperation**

47. South-South and triangular cooperation continued to form a key strategy for national capacity development. UNICEF contributed to South-South and triangular cooperation through direct technical support or exchanges between countries; multi-country learning and advocacy; and sharing of knowledge and good practices. For example, study tours were held between Malaysia and the Government of Ethiopia on Results-based Planning and Management; Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam and on the use of minority languages in the education setting; and South Africa and Thailand on linking social security systems with wider system of child protection and welfare. The Government of Brazil provided USD 100,000 in humanitarian aid to Rwanda to support early childhood development work for the influx of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

48. UNICEF worked with Population Division of UN DESA and UNDP’s Special Unit for South-South Cooperation to analyze cross-border protection concerns especially as they
relate to international migration. The initiative was the first time empirical data was collected and compiled by age group and gender, allowing accurate calculations of the number of child, adolescent and youth migrants by region. UNICEF China co-hosted a South-South Symposium on Child Poverty together with the Government of China’s State Council Leading Group on Poverty Alleviation and Development. Representatives and speakers from 17 developing nations presented research and experiences on developing policy that address to child poverty. Coordination is underway for a follow-up to the High-Level Meeting on Cooperation for Child Rights in the Asia-Pacific Region held in Beijing in 2010, which will be held in New Delhi, India in October 2013. The meeting will be an opportunity for governments through Asia to advance knowledge on issues relating to urbanization, early childhood development and adolescents.

49. While there are good examples of support to South-South Cooperation, the engagement can often be made more systemic and linked to complementary approaches. The 2014-2017 Strategic Plan, and in particular the Global and Intercountry Programme, prioritizes South-South and triangular cooperation as a key strategy for promoting child rights.

I. Promoting communication and advocacy in changing contexts

50. In 2012, UNICEF used new communication tactics and strategies to strengthen awareness and understanding of child rights and the criticality of equity to fulfilling rights with decision makers, the general public and other actors. The development of Equity Case Studies proved valuable for sharing successful equity examples with government counterparts and partners. An equity lens was integrated into all content and productions, including UNICEF flagship reports. Lessons from past productions, for example State of the World’s Children, and data collection efforts have optimized long-term strategies and messaging, including on how campaigns are created and implemented, such as A Promise Renewed.

51. UNICEF’s Sahel Now campaign demonstrated the need to engage traditional as well as new forms of media to raise awareness. National Committees and UNICEF offices united to engage in social media as the primary medium of communication for advocacy and public awareness. The campaign mobilized UNICEF’s Goodwill Ambassadors at national and global levels around coordinated messages on social media and online forums to alert the world that converging conditions were threatening the nutritional status of children in nine countries. SahelNOW drove coverage on conventional media and was featured on CNN as an innovation. UNICEF developed social media guidelines and toolkits to help National Committees and country offices attract media attention, raise awareness on children’s rights, engage audiences and support fundraising activities, especially during emergencies.

52. Digital communications are helping UNICEF bridge geographical distances and reach wider audiences, including from disadvantaged communities. The Malaysia country office has used Twitter to engage adolescents in a conversation about safety in teenage relationships. The campaign generated 1,400 Tweets on the launch day, and eventually reached over one million followers. The Voices of Youth Connect initiative offers a set of resources and tools to foster off-line civic engagement. A growing area for UNICEF is in digital safety and youth participation. In Viet Nam, UNICEF partnered with Yahoo! and the Government of Viet Nam to gather information about how young people use ICTs. UNICEF has developed a new strategic plan for improving digital engagement with children, focusing
on climate change, violence against women and children, disabilities and equity. By end 2012, the new strategy had led to a 70 per cent increase in its social media fan-base and website users. As the dynamics of communication change and more actors gain the ability to influence and drive action, UNICEF will need to explore new avenues for advocacy and mutual learning while maintaining a strong independent voice for children.

J. Strengthening research and knowledge management

53. UNICEF is engaged in a growing range of research to further build evidence on issues relevant to children, and in support of programme goals. A 2012 review of knowledge management initiatives within UNICEF revealed the need to further strengthen various initiatives at Country, Regional and Headquarters levels. The following issues have been highlighted: the need for stronger focus on the quality of research; stronger coordination and alignment around key priorities and areas of knowledge across the organization; and better sharing of knowledge including the management of appropriate structures for knowledge sharing; and promoting the use of various learning platforms and processes to facilitate the transfer and application of knowledge.

54. To strengthen research and knowledge management within UNICEF, the Office of Research was reconstituted in 2012. A new integrated research and knowledge management function will be rolled out over the coming years. UNICEF has developed a set of Guidelines for Ethical Research to strengthen the overall quality and rigor of research. The 2014-2017 Strategic Plan prioritizes strategic partnerships with external research experts and field-based organizations, particularly those in the South, to enhance the volume, relevance and applicability of research to a variety of country contexts.

K. Promoting evaluation to contribute to knowledge and accountability

55. Decisions and actions for children require the best and most appropriate evidence. UNICEF continued to promote timely, strategically focused information on the performance of policies, programmes and initiatives to produce better results for children and women. Considerable attention was given to Child Protection with the launch of a major evaluation examining UNICEF’s work in child protection in emergencies; the finalisation and dissemination of a global meta-evaluation analysing 52 evaluations on violence against children; and launch of a joint evaluation with UNFPA of the UNFPA/UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation. UNICEF contributed to the Evaluation of UNICEF’s Human Rights-based Approach to Programming, and finalized the planning phase for an evaluation of MoRES, to commence in 2013.

56. The importance of being systematic in the selection of case studies to document and share knowledge has been recognized to promote the generation of evidence and learning that is applicable and generalizable in various contexts. To strengthen the strategic review of case studies, UNICEF piloted a formal data analysis methodology to strengthen the independence, strategic rationale, and cost-effectiveness of the case study selection approach.

L. Results Based Management

57. An evaluability study of UNICEF’s Programme of Cooperation to support global capacity to respond to emergencies confirmed the need for better articulation of programme results, with attention to defining a theory of change between activities, outputs and high-
level results. The evaluability study demonstrated the need for resources to be sufficient to achieve targeted high-level results. In particular, inadequate resources were being devoted to documenting whether results (or the activities contributing to them) were being achieved.

58. Recognizing the fundamental importance of quality information for decision-making and programme design, UNICEF is redoubling efforts to strengthen results based management across all levels of the organization. A review is underway to assess quality of results statements and indicators across the organization. UNICEF has adopted standard UNDG results-based management approach and terminologies. The Performance Management Information System (InSight) has been revised to include additional indicators for the global and regional Manager’s Dashboard and interactive reports, including geocoding and map functions. UNICEF has committed to publicly disclose information on results achievement, resource flows and expenditures, in line with the 3rd and 4th High Level Forums on Aid Effectiveness.

IV. Global Operational initiatives

M. VISION

59. In response to the General Assembly mandate to implement the International Public Sector Accounting System (IPSAS) and to improve efficiency, UNICEF launched the Virtual Integrated System of Information (VISION). Attention was directed to fine-tuning policies, processes, system enhancements and training in support of the system rollout. Particular focus was on aligning staff skills with the new business requirements in the fields of finance and administration.

60. The rollout of VISION demonstrated the importance of “business buy-in” and user involvement from the beginning of the initiative, as input was vital to the effective design of processes and systems. Communication was critical to holding the various elements together. The system has improved standardized results-based planning and reporting, and overall transparency and accountability.

N. Effectiveness and Efficiency

61. Launched in 2012, the effectiveness and efficiency initiative aims to explore options to improve transactional efficiency, simplify business process, and improve UNICEF functions across all levels of the organization. UNICEF offices are implementing various strategies to reduce costs and improve efficiencies. For example, improved and expanded use of telecom facilities have helped to strengthen virtual collaboration between UNICEF offices and with partners while also contributing directly to reduction of tele-communication costs throughout the organization. Offices have also reduced international travel, with significant efforts made to supplement and substitute for mission travel through alternative solutions such as Skype, video-conferencing and webex.

62. UNICEF’s East Asia and Pacific Regional Office introduced a process of pooling technical support through common contracts and partnerships to reduce cost and improve overall effectiveness of quality assurance in key areas. For example, a core team of consultants were hired to conduct research and provide technical support to a number of countries on social cohesion and education. The Middle East and North Africa Regional Office has sought to optimize key advantages in VISION, particularly related to remote
management, which has enabled the RO to perform transactions on behalf of other offices. The Operational Support Center serves COs with small operational teams without the capacity to cope with multiple, large-scale changes, for example emergency and introduction of VISION. The experience is providing a better understanding of the management implications and needs in shared services, as well as data on volume-versus-staffing analysis. Ongoing investments in accountability and transparency will enable UNICEF to better quantify and articulate how it is contributing to outcomes and final results for children, including resourcing of results.

V. Management

O. Human Resources

63. Human resource efforts in 2012 focused on defining current and future skill requirements to identify gaps and the actions required to address gaps; enhancing the skills of managers and staff to focus on performance and meet the needs of a more complex and demanding work environment; streamlining basic human resource processes through the use of technology; and providing quality advice and guidance. Direct Selections as a recruitment method positively impacted the time-to-recruit of posts especially in critical functional areas and fields with low supply of talent. In humanitarian settings, UNICEF introduced flexible arrangements to manage risk and gain efficiencies, through within-country processing and inter-office exchange of programme staff, ranging from the short-term deployment of staff to exchange advice, know-how or best practices to extended missions that incorporate the generation of specific strategic positioning.

64. A large amount of attention was devoted to supporting strategic shifts across the organization. Although VISION provided a platform for Global HR data integration between field offices and HQ, the system has yet to be fully integrated across the organization. The lack of an integrated and rationalised HR Information System remains a barrier to the HR functioning and to the delivery of efficient, effective and quality results. VISION user support continues to be needed to ensure a smooth integration, transition and acquaintance to the new system, as well as its continued use. Adequate HR response in the aftermath of Super Storm Sandy in NYHQ stressed the importance of a sound business continuity plan. The hurricane tested UNICEF’s emergency preparedness plans especially in the ability to carry out global payroll functions and provide minimal and essential continuation of critical functions. UNICEF will need to continue to invest in this area and continue implementation of business recovery plans in light of growing disaster risk.