COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION IN AN ERA OF CHANGE

Ted Freeman

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PREFACE

Evaluation has increasingly become part of ensuring programme excellence based on a human rights-based approach to programming and results-based management. A recent meta-evaluation concluded that evaluations were being conducted mostly at the project level and that they varied widely in their depth and scope as well as in their quality. With the conduct of Country Programme Evaluations and the increase in the quality of project / activity evaluations at the country level it could be expected that organizational reporting on results and demonstration of the strategic contribution of UNICEF supported Country Programmes of Cooperation will be enhanced significantly.

The emphasis has recently shifted to joint programming among members of the UN family. The process of the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and the United Nations Development Framework (UNDAF) defines common outcomes and programming approaches that contribute to the strengthening of national capacities to attain Millennium Development Goals and translate the provisions of the Millennium Declaration into reality. The CCA / UNDAF process includes a joint M&E Plan as well as provisions for a joint UNDAF Evaluation to be carried out in the penultimate year of the common programme cycle. The scope, depth and quality of the UNDAF Evaluation will, however, depend on the quality of reviews and evaluations of Country Programmes supported by individual agencies. It will also depend on ownership and leadership of the governments and other national partners in the process.

In March 2003, the Department for International Department (DFID) of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and the Northern Ireland approved funding of a three-year project for Country Programme Evaluation (CPE) Methodology and Guidance Development, which is being implemented by UNICEF's Evaluation Office at New York Headquarters. The project aims UNICEF's goal stated in the Medium Term Strategic Plan (2002-2005) to make Country Programmes of Cooperation more effective in terms of focus, implementation strategies and coordination within UNDAF and with other development partners. Since its inception, the project has established basic principles and methodologies for CPE, supported a limited number of field tests and contributed to the development of evaluation capacities for UNICEF staff and national counterparts.

The present paper prepared by an independent consultant and researcher, Ted Freeman, describes the potential of CPE as an effective strategy to improve the quality of programming in an era of change. The argument is developed within the current framework, which still maintains the principle of Country Programmes of Cooperation (CPC) implemented by individual agencies, albeit within the context of CCA / UNDAF. Country Programme Evaluations are thereby meant to strategically feed into the UNDAF evaluation, which focuses on joint outcomes and common programme processes. However, what is said here about CPEs could easily apply to expanded UNDAF evaluations that may result from multi-agency joint programmes.

I would hereby like to thank Ted Freeman for his comprehensive review of the current development literature and for his thought-provoking comments and recommendations. The task was accomplished in close cooperation with Lucien Back, Sr. Programme Officer in the Evaluation Office. Earlier versions of the discussion paper were commented by numerous colleagues within UNICEF. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all those who have contributed to this paper.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CCA	Common Country Assessment
CDF	Comprehensive Development Framework
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CPAP	Country Programme of Action Plan
CPC	Country Programme of Cooperation
CPD	Country Programme Document
CPE	Country Programme Evaluation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFID	Department of International Development
ExCom	Executive Committees of the UNDG comprising of UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP and UNDP
HRBAP	Human Rights Based Approach to Programming
IFI	International Financial Institution
IMEP	Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MTR	Mid-Term Review
MTSP	Medium Term Strategic Plan
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PBA	Programme Based Approaches
PPPM	Programme Policy and Procedure Manual
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
S&H	Simplification and Harmonization
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SWAP	Sector Wide Approach to Planning
UNCT	UN Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.   Background and purpose

For some time, and definitely since the 2001 Report of the Secretary General on the Triennial Policy Review of Operational Activities of the United Nations, UNICEF along with other UN agencies has been engaged in an effort to study the potential role and utility of Country Programme Evaluation (CPE) as a tool for improving programme effectiveness. Commitment to CPE as an important approach to improving accountability can be found in UNICEF's current Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) and in Executive Board documents and decisions regarding the evaluation function at UNICEF.

UNICEF has a well-established and widely recognized commitment to a country programme approach for planning and implementing its activities at country level. As noted in UNICEF's *Programme Policy and Procedure Manual:*

> The CP is more than just the sum of UNICEF assisted activities. It brings together, conceptually and operationally, all programmes as comprehensive, mutually supporting measures involving different sectors, partners and communities, and often different levels of government." p.19

This paper attempts to examine to what extent Country Programme Evaluation when integrated with a Human Rights Based Approach to Programming (HRBAP) at UNICEF can serve to strengthen the country programme approach and form part of an effective strategy for dealing with global changes. It does not specifically address challenges that exist for the evaluation of humanitarian action in unstable contexts, as this will be the subject of a separate paper. It builds on work undertaken by the Evaluation Office, in particular, through a survey of Country Programme Evaluation as practiced among UN agencies and pilot CPEs in a number of UNICEF country programmes.

In order to strengthen CPE practice and provide better guidance to programme managers, the Evaluation Office at UNICEF has embarked on a project for Country Programme Evaluation Methodology and Guidance Development with the support of the Department for International Development of the Government of the United Kingdom (DFID).

2.   Signpost events in the era of change

Critical changes in the nature of international development cooperation have accelerated over the past decade. A partial listing of the most important events influencing the pace and direction of change would include:

- *Shaping the 21ˢᵗ Century: The Contribution of Development Cooperation* produced by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (1996)
- The World Bank's publication of a study by David Dollar and Lant Pritchett entitled *Assessing Aid: What Works, What Doesn't, and Why*? (1998)
- The *Millennium Declaration* and wide-spread acceptance of the *Millennium Development Goals. (*2000)
- The International Conference on Financing for Development and the *Monterrey Consensus*. (2002)
- Evolution of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)
- Rise of the Human Security Agenda (People Centred Security)

- Rise of the Human Rights Based Approach to Programming
- Continuing increase in the use of Programme Based Approaches
- Rome Declaration on Harmonization (2003)

In some ways, each of these events represents recognition of failings and problems in established paradigms for international cooperation. The prescriptions and declarations they produced all pointed to different ways of planning, funding, organizing and implementing international cooperation programmes in order to improve their effectiveness.

Nonetheless, these different strands in the process of change can be seen as contributing to a strong movement for change in the ways bilateral and multilateral organizations and national governments cooperate. The movement involves a much stronger commitment to a development process that is largely owned by the countries and people who are the focus of development cooperation activities. It also encompasses a recognition that development cooperation must help to realize the human rights of people and communities and must focus on the poorest and most marginalized members of society. Finally, the movement for change in development cooperation places a very strong emphasis on the need for ensuring that external assistance is coordinated, coherent and harmonized with national priorities, plans and procedures.

3.   Country Programme Evaluation and the Programme Planning process

UNICEF's experience with CPEs indicate that where Country Programmes of Cooperation (CPCs) face radical changes in the context and situation of children and women, a well constructed Country Programme Evaluation can be used as the mechanism for carrying out UNICEF's Mid-Term Review. Mores specifically the CPE is an effective means of meeting the programming and accountability requirements of the MTR, when a CPC faces:

- a dramatic change in the situation of children and women;
- a major change in national policy towards children;
- major new opportunities for increased resources (or a sudden falloff in resources);
- a special opportunity for organizational learning arising from a highly innovative Country Programme Strategy; or,
- demands for a CPE from government or external agencies providing support.

4.   Advantages of the CPE as an HRBAP-linked strategic response to change at UNICEF

By being strongly linked to the HRBAP, the country programme evaluation can serve as one important element in UNICEF's strategic response to the changing nature of international development cooperation. More specifically, the advantages of CPE include:

- Providing national scope and a broader focus than project evaluation in order to assess the strategic response of the Country Programme of Cooperation (CPC) to the challenge of HRBAP;
- Providing a broader scope, a strategic focus and more intensive and in-depth evaluative methods and resources for re-orienting CPCs faced with important changes in context;
- Improving the alignment of the CPC to national goals and strategic directions as set out in the PRSP;
- Improving the general quality and programmatic relevance of the evaluation function at UNICEF; and,

- Strengthening UNICEF's flexibility, technical expertise and capacity at regional and country office level to allow the agency to take part in increasingly frequent joint evaluations involving a wider set of external agencies and CPEs that are increasingly country-led.

In relation to UNICEF's Human Rights Based Approach to Programming, CPEs have a distinct advantage over project and sub-programme evaluations in that they should be focused explicitly at the strategic level. They provide for a systematic assessment of how well UNICEF and its partners have developed and implemented strategies for advancing the rights of children and women at the national level. At the same time, by encompassing a review of key programme components with a community focus, CPEs can effectively examine the implications of community focused HRBAP in the broader context of their real or potential links to national policies and their replicability in other geographic locations.

RÉSUMÉ ANALYTIQUE

1.   Contexte et objectif

Depuis quelque temps, et surtout depuis le rapport de 2001 du Secrétaire général sur l'examen triennal des politiques régissant les activités opérationnelles des Nations Unies, l'UNICEF est engagé avec d'autres organismes des Nations Unies dans une étude du rôle et de l'utilité potentiels de l'Evaluation des programmes de coopération (EPC) en tant qu'outil destiné à améliorer l'efficacité des programmes. L'UNICEF est décidé à faire de l'EPC sa méthode de base pour renforcer le principe de responsabilité, comme le montrent son Plan stratégique à moyen terme et la documentation et les décisions de son Conseil d'administration sur la fonction d'évaluation.

L'engagement de l'UNICEF en faveur d'une méthode nationale de programmation pour la planification et la mise en œuvre de ses activités est bien établi et largement reconnu. Ainsi qu'il est inscrit dans le *Manuel des politiques et procédures de programmation* de l'UNICEF:

> « Le Programme de coopération est bien plus que la somme pure et simple des activités recevant le soutien de l'UNICEF. Il rassemble tous les programmes, tant conceptuellement qu'opérationnellement, en un ensemble de mesures exhaustives et complémentaires mettant en jeu divers secteurs, partenaires et communautés, et souvent divers niveaux de gouvernement. »

Le présent document s'efforce d'examiner à quel point l'évaluation des programmes de coopération, une fois qu'elle est intégrée à une méthode de programmation fondée sur les droits de l'homme, peut aider l'UNICEF à renforcer l'approche du Programme de coopération qui est la sienne, et constituer un des éléments d'une stratégie efficace de gestion du changement au niveau mondial. Il ne traite pas spécifiquement des difficultés existantes pour l'évaluation de l'action humanitaire dans les situations volatiles, ce thème étant développé dans un document séparé. Il s'inspire des travaux entrepris par le Bureau de l'évaluation, en particulier les études comparées de l'EPC pratiquées par les organismes des Nations Unies et les EPC pilotes mises en œuvre dans un certain nombre de programmes nationaux relevant de l'UNICEF.

Dans le but de renforcer la pratique de l'EPC et de fournir un meilleur encadrement aux responsables de programmes, le Bureau de l'évaluation de l'UNICEF s'est lancé dans un projet de méthodologie et d'élaboration de consignes pour l'évaluation des programmes de coopération, avec le soutien du « Department for International Development » (DFID) du Royaume-Uni.

2.   Evénements significatifs à l'ère du changement

Des changements cruciaux dans la nature de la coopération pour le développement international sont intervenus à un rythme accéléré pendant la dernière décennie. Voici une liste partielle des événements les plus importants ayant influé sur le rythme et l'orientation du changement :

- *Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Cooperation*, produit par le Comité d'aide au développement de l'Organisation de Coopération et de Développement Economiques (1996)

- La publication par la Banque Mondiale d'une étude de David Dollar et Lant Pritchett intitulée *Assessing Aid: What Works, What Doesn't, and Why*? (1998) [Evaluation de l'aide : ce qui marche, ce qui ne marche pas et pourquoi]
- La *Déclaration du Millénaire* et l'adoption à grande échelle des Objectifs du Millénaire pour le Développement *(*2000).
- La Conférence internationale sur le financement pour le développement et le *Consensus de Monterrey* (2002).
- L'évolution du Cadre stratégique de lutte contre la pauvreté (PRSP).
- L'essor de l'agenda de sécurité humaine (sécurité centrée sur les personnes).
- L'essor de la méthode de programmation fondée sur les droits de l'homme.
- Le recours croissant aux approches fondées sur les programmes.
- La déclaration de Rome sur l'harmonisation (2003).

Par certains côtés, chacun des ces événements représente une reconnaissance des échecs et problèmes posés par les paradigmes établis pour la coopération internationale. Les recommandations et déclarations auxquelles ils ont donné lieu ont tous mis en évidence différentes façons de planifier, financer, organiser et mettre en œuvre les programmes de coopération internationale afin d'améliorer leur efficacité.

Tous ces différents enchaînements dans le processus du changement peuvent néanmoins être vus comme des contributions à un mouvement qui vise à changer la façon dont les organisations bilatérales et multilatérales coopèrent avec les gouvernements nationaux. Ce mouvement met en œuvre un engagement beaucoup plus fort envers un processus de développement que se sont largement approprié les pays et les personnes qui se trouvent au centre des activités de coopération pour le développement. Il comprend aussi la reconnaissance du fait que la coopération pour le développement doit contribuer à la réalisation des droits fondamentaux des personnes et des communautés, et cibler les éléments les plus pauvres et les plus marginalisés de la société. Enfin, le mouvement en faveur du changement dans la coopération pour le développement met très fortement l'accent sur le besoin de s'assurer que l'aide extérieure soit coordonnée, cohérente et harmonisée avec les priorités, procédures et plans nationaux.

3. L'évaluation des programmes de coopération et le processus de planification des programmes

L'expérience de l'UNICEF avec les EPC démontre que lorsque les programmes nationaux de coopération doivent faire face à des changements radicaux dans le contexte et la situation des enfants et des femmes, une Evaluation du programme de coopération bien construite peut être utilisée comme mécanisme de mise en œuvre de l'examen à mi-parcours entrepris par l'UNICEF. De façon plus spécifique, l'EPC est une façon efficace de répondre aux impératifs de programmation et de responsabilisation propres à l'Examen à mi-parcours lorsqu'un programme de coopération national doit s'accommoder :

- d'un changement spectaculaire dans la situation des enfants et des femmes ;
- d'un changement significatif dans la politique nationale à l'encontre des enfants ;
- de nouvelles occasions importantes d'accroître les ressources (ou d'une chute soudaine de ces ressources) ;
- d'une occasion spéciale d'apprentissage organisationnel résultant d'une stratégie de programmation extrêmement novatrice au niveau du pays,
- d'une demande expresse d'EPC émanant du gouvernement ou des bailleurs de fonds externes.

4. Les avantages présentés par l'EPC en tant que réaction stratégique de l'UNICEF au changement, en liaison avec la méthode de programmation fondée sur les droits de l'homme

En établissant un lien fort avec la méthode de programmation fondée sur les droits de l'homme, l'évaluation des programmes de coopération peut jouer un rôle important dans la réaction stratégique qu'offre l'UNICEF à la nature changeante de la coopération internationale pour le développement. De façon plus spécifique, les avantages de l'EPC sont les suivants :

- Elle présente une envergure nationale et un champ d'action plus étendu que l'évaluation de projet pour déterminer la réaction stratégique fournie par le programme de coopération au défi que représente la méthode de programmation fondée sur les droits de l'homme ;

- Elle offre une portée plus large, un axe stratégique et des méthodes et ressources d'évaluation plus intensives et plus approfondies pour donner une nouvelle orientation aux programmes de coopération qui doivent faire face à des changements de contexte importants ;

- Elle améliore l'alignement du programme de coopération national sur les objectifs nationaux et les orientations stratégiques énoncés dans le Cadre stratégique de lutte contre la pauvreté ;

- Elle améliore la qualité d'ensemble de la programmation et la pertinence de la fonction d'évaluation à l'UNICEF ;

- Elle renforce la souplesse de l'UNICEF, ses compétences techniques et sa capacité aux niveaux de ses bureaux régionaux et nationaux, permettant ainsi à cet organisme de prendre part à des évaluations conjointes de plus en plus fréquentes mettant en jeu un ensemble plus vaste d'organismes extérieurs et des EPC placés de plus en plus souvent sous la direction des autorités nationales.

En relation avec la méthode de programmation fondée sur les droits de l'homme que pratique l'UNICEF, les EPC présentent un avantage net par rapport aux évaluations de projets et de sous-programmes, dans la mesure où elles devraient explicitement se situer au niveau de la stratégie. Elles prévoient une estimation systématique du degré de succès rencontré par l'UNICEF et ses partenaires dans l'élaboration et la mise en œuvre des stratégies visant à promouvoir les droits des enfants et des femmes au niveau national. Ce faisant, en incorporant un examen des éléments de programmation fondamentaux dans une optique communautaire, les EPC peuvent étudier avec efficacité les implications d'une méthode de programmation fondée sur les droits de l'homme et axée sur la communauté dans le contexte plus large des liens réels ou potentiels qu'ont ces éléments de programmation avec les politiques nationales, ainsi que l'éventualité de leur reproduction dans d'autres lieux géographiques.

RESUMEN EJECUTIVO

1. Antecedentes y fines

Desde hace cierto tiempo, y sobre todo a partir de 2001, con la Memoria del Secretario General sobre el Examen Trienal de la Política Global (TCPR) de actividades operacionales de las Naciones Unidas, el UNICEF, junto con otros organismos de las Naciones Unidas, se ha comprometido en un esfuerzo para estudiar el papel y la utilidad potenciales de la evaluación de programas de cooperación (EPC) como medio para mejorar la eficacia de los programas. El compromiso con la EPC, como enfoque de gran importancia para mejorar la rendición de cuentas, está ya inscrito en el actual Plan Estratégico de Mediano Plazo del UNICEF y en documentos y decisiones de la Junta Ejecutiva relativos a la función de evaluación en el seno del UNICEF.

El compromiso del UNICEF con el enfoque de programas de cooperación para la planificación y ejecución de sus actividades a escala del país es conocido por todos y tiene carácter permanente. Tal como se indica en su documento *Manual de política de programas y procedimientos*:

> *El programa de cooperación es más que la suma de las actividades que respalda el UNICEF. Recoge, conceptual y operativamente, todos los programas en tanto que medidas globales que se apoyan mutuamente y en las que participan diferentes sectores, aliados y comunidades, y a menudo diferentes niveles de gobierno (p. 19)*

El presente documento pretende examinar en qué medida la EPC, cuando está integrada en la programación basada en los derechos humanos practicada en el UNICEF, puede ser de utilidad para reforzar el enfoque de programas de cooperación y puede formar parte de una estrategia eficaz que permita hacer frente a los cambios globales. El presente documento no aborda específicamente los desafíos existentes en materia de evaluación de la acción humanitaria en contextos poco estables, que será objeto de un documento especial. En cambio, se nutre de trabajos realizados por la Oficina de Evaluación, en particular, por medio de un estudio acerca de la evaluación de programas de cooperación tal como se lleva a cabo en los organismos de las Naciones Unidas, así como de una serie de EPC piloto realizadas en un determinado número de programas de cooperación que cuentan con el apoyo del UNICEF.

A fin de reforzar la práctica de las EPC y proporcionar una mejor orientación a los responsables de la gestión de programas, la Oficina de Evaluación del UNICEF ha lanzado un proyecto que tiene por objeto el desarrollo de metodología y de orientaciones relativas a las EPC, que cuenta con el apoyo del Departamento de Desarrollo Internacional del Gobierno del Reino Unido (DFID).

2. Hitos cruciales en una era de cambios

Una serie de cambios de gran importancia en la naturaleza de la cooperación internacional para el desarrollo se han acelerado en el pasado decenio. Una lista incompleta de los principales hitos que han influenciado la dirección y el ritmo de los cambios podría estar compuesta por:

- *Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Cooperation*, elaborado por la Comisión de asistencia al desarrollo de la Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económicos (1996)
- El estudio publicado por el Banco Mundial *Assessing Aid: What Works, What Doesn't, and Why*? (1998), de David Dollar y Lant Pritchett
- La Declaración del Milenio, así como la aceptación generalizada de los Objetivos de Desarrollo del Milenio (2000)
- La Conferencia Internacional sobre Financiación del Desarrollo y el *Consenso de Monterrey* (2002)
- La evolución del Documento de estrategia de lucha contra la pobreza (DELP)
- El auge de la agenda para la seguridad humana (seguridad centrada en las personas)
- El auge de la programación basada en los derechos humanos
- El crecimiento constante de la utilización de enfoques basados en los programas
- La Declaración de Roma sobre armonización (2003)

En cierto sentido, cada uno de estos hitos representa el reconocimiento de fracasos y problemas en los paradigmas establecidos en materia de cooperación internacional. Las normas y declaraciones que aportan señalan otros modos de planificar, financiar, organizar y llevar a la práctica los programas de cooperación internacional, con el fin de mejorar su efectividad.

No obstante, estos diferentes aspectos del proceso de cambio pueden entenderse como un medio para contribuir a un amplio movimiento de cambio en los métodos de colaboración de las organizaciones bilaterales y multilaterales y los gobiernos nacionales. Dicho movimiento implica un compromiso mucho mayor con un proceso de desarrollo que es propiedad en gran medida de los países y los pueblos a los que van dirigidas las actividades de cooperación al desarrollo. Asimismo, incluye el reconocimiento de que la cooperación al desarrollo debe contribuir a la realización de los derechos humanos de los pueblos y las comunidades, y debe centrarse en los miembros de la sociedad más pobres y marginales. Por último, el movimiento de cambio en la cooperación al desarrollo hace un énfasis especial en la necesidad de garantizar que la asistencia exterior esté coordinada y sea coherente y armónica con las prioridades, planes y procedimientos nacionales.

3. Evaluación de programas de cooperación (EPC) y Proceso de planificación de programas

La experiencia del UNICEF en materia de EPC indica que los casos en que los programas de cooperación hacen frente a cambios radicales en el contexto y la situación de los niños y las mujeres, una evaluación del programa de cooperación bien llevada puede utilizarse como mecanismo para realizar el Examen de mitad de periodo (EMP) del UNICEF. Más concretamente, la EPC constituye un medio efectivo para cumplir con los requisitos de programación y rendición de cuentas del citado EMP, en los casos en que los programas de cooperación se enfrenten a:
- cambios drásticos en la situación de niños y mujeres;
- un cambio de gran envergadura en la política nacional relativa a la infancia;
- nuevas e importantes oportunidades de obtener mayores recursos (o bien una reducción repentina de éstos);

- una oportunidad especial de aprendizaje para la organización derivado de una estrategia de programa de cooperación innovadora; o
- exigencias de una EPC por parte del gobierno o de los donantes .

4. Ventajas de la EPC como respuesta estratégica del UNICEF al cambio, vinculada con la programación basada en los derechos humanos

Por medio de un vínculo estrecho con la programación basada en los derechos humanos, la EPC puede servir como elemento importante de la respuesta estratégica del UNICEF a la naturaleza cambiante de la cooperación internacional para el desarrollo. Más concretamente, las ventajas que ofrece la EPC son, entre otras:

- proporciona un alcance nacional y un enfoque más amplio que la evaluación de proyectos con el fin de evaluar la respuesta estratégica del programa de cooperación a los desafíos de la programación basada en los derechos humanos;
- proporciona un alcance más amplio y un enfoque estratégico, así como métodos y recursos más intensivos y exhaustivos de evaluación para la reorientación de los programas de cooperación ante un contexto cambiante;
- mejora la adaptación de los programas de cooperación a las directivas y los objetivos y estratégicos nacionales, tal como se establece en el Documento de estrategia de lucha contra la pobreza (DELP)
- mejora la calidad general y la pertinencia programática de la función de evaluación en el UNICEF, y
- refuerza la flexibilidad y la capacidad técnica del UNICEF a escala de oficina regional y del país, con el fin de permitir que nuestro organismo participe en evaluaciones conjuntas, cada vez más frecuentes, en las que participa un grupo amplio de agencias externas y EPC realizadas cada vez más por países.

En relación con la programación basada en los derechos humanos, las EPC tienen una ventaja específica sobre las evaluaciones de proyecto y de subprograma, en la medida en que aquéllas deben estar explícitamente centradas a escala estratégica. Asimismo, proporcionan una evaluación sistemática del buen hacer del UNICEF y sus aliados, y de las estrategias implementadas para el desarrollo de los derechos de los niños y las mujeres a escala nacional. Al mismo tiempo, al abarcar el examen de los principales componentes del programa con un enfoque comunitario, por medio de las EPC se puede efectivamente examinar las implicaciones de una programación basada en los derechos humanos centrada en la comunidad en el contexto más amplio de sus vínculos reales o potenciales con las políticas nacionales, y respecto a su posibilidad de reproducción en otros contextos geográficos.

1. Introduction

The *Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities of the United Nations System* (Report of the Secretary General A/56/320 August 2001) emphasised the need to move away from the project level towards strategic and policy oriented monitoring and evaluation (paragraph 60). Similarly, UNICEF's Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) 2002 - 20005 announces that evaluation will generally focus more on the country programme level and strategic governance of the organisation as a whole. UNICEF's Board Paper concerning the evaluation function in the context of the MTSP (Board Document E/ICEF/2002/10 and Decision 2002/9) confirmed the commitment for the organization to strengthen Country Programme Evaluation (CPE).

This paper builds on those commitments and on work done by the UNICEF Evaluation Office to pilot test CPEs and to develop guidance on its use by country office staff and national partners. Its main purpose is to examine how a country programme evaluation when integrated with the human rights based approach to programming (HRBAP) can help UNICEF respond to some of the very important challenges resulting from the changing nature of development cooperation.

UNICEF, like all organizations in the UN system and beyond, faces a complex set of challenges arising from significant changes in the world of international cooperation for development, humanitarian relief and support of human rights. This paper will argue that these changes are far-reaching and fundamental and will require a strategic and operational response from UNICEF.

Of course, change is not a new phenomenon and UNICEF has been making ongoing improvements to its programme approaches and its systems for developing, planning, implementing and evaluating programmes of cooperation with developing countries. Most immediately, UNICEF has taken part in efforts to simplify, harmonize and achieve coherence in the activities of the UN system, especially through the work of the UN country teams and the Simplification and Harmonization (S&H) Working Group of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG).

The changes and challenges that are central to this paper also find UNICEF in the midst of advancing an innovative and reasonably unique approach to programming: the HRBAP. Similarly, UNICEF is currently working to improve the evaluation function as a tool for strategic management within the organization.

Country programme evaluations can contribute to strengthening the evaluation function at UNICEF. At the same time, this form of evaluation is still in an experimental mode. It faces challenges in proving its worth either as an enhancement or as a special approach to carry out the well-established Mid-Term Review (MTR) function — currently a central part of the country programme review and development process, with accountability to UNICEF's Executive Board.

One argument for strengthening CPE at UNICEF can be found in the strong relationship between evaluation and HRBAP. HRBAP gives rise to evaluative issues and questions that cut across specific UNICEF-supported activities, projects and programmes in any one country and go to the heart of its relationships with partner governments and communities. In that sense, it can be argued that CPE can be an essential tool in effectively implementing HRBAP and thus

can be an effective approach to improving the strategic relevance of the evaluation function at UNICEF: CPE as part of an effective strategy in an era of change.

In order to explore some of these ideas further and to strengthen practice in CPE at UNICEF, the Evaluation Office initiated a project for *Country Programme Evaluation Methodology and Guidance Development* with the support of the Department for International Development of the Government of the United Kingdom (DFID).

The project includes work on evaluation concepts and policies as well as pilot Country Programme Evaluations and the preparation of material to provide guidance to evaluation practitioners in UNICEF Country Offices.

This paper draws on earlier work done in the project relating specifically to the interface between Evaluation and HRBAP but broadens the scope of discussion to an examination of how CPE as an element in HRBAP can serve to strengthen evaluation and help UNICEF respond to the multi-faceted changes detailed in the sections that follow.

This paper does not explicitly address challenges related to the evaluation of humanitarian action in unstable contexts. This is a growing area of work for UNICEF. Planning, programming, and monitoring and evaluation face specific characteristics that will be the subject of a separate discussion paper.

2.   An Era of Change

2.1   The changing nature of development cooperation

Development professionals and evaluators often view the form and content of development cooperation as subject to cycles of change. In these cycles of change, approaches that have been found wanting and apparently abandoned in the past are sometimes re-discovered as the solutions to new challenges somehow not anticipated when they were abandoned and discredited. Thus, the "flavour of the month" — more likely to be the flavour of a few years — was probably the flavour of the month one or more decades ago and may not represent any truly fundamental movement to change.

Indeed, there may be some truth in the statement that there is nothing truly new under the sun of development cooperation. Nonetheless, this paper will argue that recent trends in development cooperation point to the very real possibility of a "change in the way we all do business" and that the pace of change is accelerating and its implications for UNICEF are deepening. There are at least three underlying factors "driving" the processes of change faced by UNICEF (and by all the key actors in development cooperation):

- An understanding that development process must be "owned" to a much greater extent by the countries and people who are the focus of development cooperation activities;

- A parallel understanding that development cooperation must be focussed on alleviating poverty and must strengthen the realization of human rights of people and communities; and,

- A desire to ensure that external support to development processes happens in a coordinated and coherent way, in particular, that the actions and programmes of the UN agencies be developed, implemented and evaluated in a coordinated way at country level.

2.1.1 Milestone events in the process of change

While there may be a few fundamental factors driving the process of change, the individual strands of change are many and the timing of individual milestone events and their inter-relationship can be difficult to sort. Some of the most prominent events in the process of changing the form and content of development cooperation are worth a brief examination.

Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Cooperation, Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation (OECD/DAC). 1996.

This document described the elements of effective development cooperation likely to produce progress towards reducing poverty. For donors the document called for financial support at a program and budget level linked to capacity building and to participation. For developing countries, the prescription was for an effective policy environment and development priorities on equitable (pro-poor) growth.

Assessing Aid—What Works, What Doesn't, and Why. David Dollar and Lance Pritchett. World Bank. 1998

This multi-layered analysis of progress of different countries in moving to alleviate poverty made a much publicized link between basically sound developing country policies and effective

external support to development. Using multivariate analysis of progress in GDP growth, the authors argued that stable macroeconomic environments, open trade regimes, protected property rights and efficient public bureaucracies delivering health, education and other public services represented the "right" mix of policies for developing countries. The study further argued that, when combined with aid, these national policies produce accelerated progress in reducing poverty. Further, the authors argued that direct conditionality was less effective at encouraging good policy than longer term engagement in promoting reform where countries were already showing commitment.

Finally, the authors pointed out that the flow of bilateral and multilateral aid to developing countries was more linked to tradition and the pre-existence of colonial ties than to a given countries commitment to "good" policies. The study concluded that development assistance was not flowing to those countries following best practices but responding to other factors not linked to success.

Clearly, Assessing Aid produced lessons and presented positions that were controversial and not acceptable to many agencies. One of the most important challenges for UN agencies with a humanitarian mandate was how does a commitment to "reward" countries with good policies (or a strong commitment to move toward them) square with the UN Charter and the agencies mandates to assist all member states and respond to needs in every country. What the document did accomplish, however, was to demonstrate a link between effective national policy and effective use of external aid.

Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals (2000)

In 2000, the General Assembly adopted resolution 55/2 *The United Nations Millennium Declaration* that committed the UN and its member states and governments to actions in the areas of:

- Peace, Security and Disarmament
- Development and Poverty Eradication
- Protecting our Common Environment
- Human Rights, Democracy and Good Governance
- Protecting the Vulnerable
- Meeting the Special Needs of Africa
- Strengthening the United Nations

In its statement of values and with its focus on human rights, democracy and good governance as well as on protecting the vulnerable, the Millennium Declaration provided a further strengthening of the rationale for UNICEF (and indeed the UN) to be directly involved in promoting human rights through development cooperation. Thus, there is a direct link from HRBAP at UNICEF to core elements of the Millennium Declaration.

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) along with their associated 18 targets and 48 indicators have provided a focus for strategy and policy development, particularly for bilateral development agencies, over the past four years. Donor countries have increasingly relied on the MDGs as an agreed set of specific goals, targets and indicators to guide their programmes of development cooperation. This becomes especially important when a group of bilateral agencies is attempting to provide coordinated support to a specific sector of development in a given country.

International Conference on Financing for Development and the Monterrey Consensus (2002)

The intent of the conference organized by the UN in conjunction with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank was to address the shortfall in external financial support to the development process, especially in light of the Millennium Development Goals. The consensus document, however, drew a clear line between developing countries abilities to provide "appropriate policy and regulatory frameworks" (p.3), good governance, and progress in fighting corruption on the one hand, and necessary increases in external investment on the other. Interestingly, the consensus document also committed "multilateral and bilateral financial and development institutions" (p.10) to reform their practices by harmonizing operational procedures, untying aid, supporting development of partner country management capacity, using development frameworks owned by partner countries, making more use of budget support, enhance developing country ownership and improving targeting to the poor.

In summary, the Monterrey Consensus seemed to re-enforce the prescriptions of *Assessing Aid* in that it linked improvements in developing country policy environments, governance and anti-corruption activities to an increase in the volume and a reform in the practice of development cooperation.

Evolution of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

Supported by the World Bank and linked to both the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process has now entered into its second generation in many countries. From sometimes difficult beginnings and a wide perception that it was largely an externally driven process, the PRSP has, at least in a number of countries, come to represent a much more concrete and comprehensive vehicle for development planning and for expressing national priorities and plans. However one may view its intrinsic merits, the PRSP represents a major vehicle for priority and strategy setting for many countries. Increasingly, the PRSP must be taken into account by all those agencies, bilateral and multilateral, which are, planning, implementing and evaluating development cooperation programmes.

Rise of the Human Security Agenda (People Centred Security)

The past decade has seen a major shift in the theory and practice of state-to-state relations and the concept of national security with the articulation of a people-centred approach to security. It has built on work done by UNDP for the Human Development Report and on theoretical work by Amartya Sen and others. The 2003 Conference on Human Security in its report *Human Security Now* drew an explicit link between freedom from want and freedom from fear. Similarly, Japan, Canada and the United Kingdom have all emphasised the importance of people centred models of security in the era of globalization. Among other dimensions, Human Security models emphasize the limitations of national sovereignty and the explicit international "Responsibility to Protect" civilians and non-combatants.

Rise of Human Rights Based Approaches to Programming

As well as UNICEF, a number of bilateral (DFID, Sida) and multilateral development agencies (and NGOS) have chosen to ground some or all of their programmes of development cooperation in the concept of human rights based or human rights oriented approaches. Since 1998, this has been official policy at UNICEF and has led to a stronger focus on capacity development for both rights holders and duty bearers. The implications of HRBAP at UNICEF are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 below.

Increased Use of Programme Based Approaches

Many development agencies (including most bilateral agencies) are increasingly committed to moving away from distinct development projects and towards support of programmes for a given sub-sector or sector (SWAPs), often using pooled funding as the financial support mechanism. At its most extreme, this trend culminates in direct support to the national expenditure budget with no explicit link from donor funds to a specific activity or programme. Joint government/donor steering and accountability for direct budget support is provided through the common review of public expenditure plans and budgets.

One result of this trend has been a movement toward more common evaluations with joint participation by both national governments and external agencies that presents its own particular challenges for evaluation at UNICEF. Nonetheless, UNICEF has been active in supporting some joint donor/government evaluations on both a global and national level.

OECD/DAC Rome Declaration on Harmonization (2003)

Under the auspices of the OECD/DAC, a large group of multilateral and bilateral development institutions, representatives of the IMF, other international financial institutions and partner countries gathered in Rome, Italy from 24-25 February, 2003. The declaration that summarized their deliberations made a strong commitment on the part of the external agencies to redouble efforts to harmonize and simplify their operations in order to reduce the transaction costs for partner countries and to avoid continuing to overwhelm their administrative and planning capacities. As well as emphasizing the use of programme based approaches, where they are consistent with the mandates of the organizations concerned, the declaration pays particular attention to the question of monitoring systems. In an annex on good practice standards and principles for harmonization, the participants pointed out:

Currently over 60,000 development projects and programmes are funded by donors, and preparing the multiple reports required by each donor for each activity often exceeds the capacity of partner countries. Given this, we agree that it is desirable for donors and partner countries to simplify individual systems and procedures and to work together toward common formats, contents, and frequency for a single periodic report per project that meets the needs of all partners. In so doing, it will be important not to overburden country systems or divert existing capacity. We acknowledge that one way of achieving this would be to ensure that the reporting and monitoring systems that donors use are simplified and harmonized.

The Second International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results held at Marrakech in 2004 committed participating agencies to the goal of harmonizing results reporting and to "undertake a country-led process of harmonizing results reporting in at least four partner countries" in 2004 (p.3.). The Action Plan produced at the Marrakech meeting also called on the international community "to reduce the individual agency requirements for results reporting and avoid fragmented, donor-driven monitoring and evaluation systems.

2.1.2 Cumulative effects of events and milestones in the process of change

While each of these events in the process of change may have greater and lesser influence, in combination they represent a strong evolutionary movement in the ways in which development organizations (bilateral and multilateral) and developing countries cooperate. At a minimum, this movement has the following strong characteristics:

- A focus on national policies and national development plans and programmes as the core determining factors of development, which implies a further commitment to national ownership and leadership of the development process;
- A corollary to the point above that recognizes the roles and rights of civil society and of communities, families and individuals as they participate in the development process. Two strong strands of this corollary are the Human Security Agenda and Human Rights Based Approaches to Programming;
- A commitment on the part of development organizations to provide (to the extent possible within their mandates) programmatic support to national policies, programmes and services;
- A commitment on the part of partner countries to pursue improved governance, reduced corruption and pro-poor growth strategies;
- A priority focus on the poorest, most marginalized and excluded populations;
- A strong commitment to the harmonization of operational procedures by development agencies; and,
- A strong commitment to common and simplified approaches (to the extent possible country led) and systems for monitoring and evaluation.

Clearly, commitment to these changes varied across agencies and among governments. Progress is by no means linear and the extent of consensus varies over time. Nonetheless, it is not entirely wishful thinking to suggest that the basic conceptual paradigms underpinning development cooperation are changing.

These characteristics of the "era of change" in development cooperation have important implications for the United Nations and for UNICEF — implications for how programmes are developed, designed and implemented, as well as for how they are monitored and evaluated.

Perhaps the immediate implication for UN agencies is the expectation that their programming in developing countries will be increasingly coherent and coordinated. It is quite interesting that the UNDG Executive Committee in the January 2004 *Report of the Greentree Retreat* identified a link between perceived incoherence in the UN programme and a trend to reduced resources for UN agencies. In the words of the report:

> Donors, while recognizing he critical role of the UN system in developing the MDGs, have increasingly opted for other channels as their preferred choices for additional and new types of funding flows. Having been instrumental in achieving consensus on the MDGs, the UN system is not sufficiently benefiting from the new resource flows arising from them. Perceptions of complexity, duplication and overlap still persist in the minds of important donors about UN operational in the field. Competition rather than coherence is still seen as the defining characteristic of the UN field system. These perceptions have a very real impact on donor funding decisions.

2.2   UN response and UNDAF

One of the key elements in the United Nations response to the changes discussed above has been a continued effort to deepen and strengthen the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process. The UNDAF originated in 1997 as part of an overall effort to increase the presence, coherence and overall effectiveness of UN operations in development at a time when the Bretton Woods agencies were exerting considerable influence in the area of structural adjustment. The UNDAF was one of the key mechanisms for advancing UN reform as proposed by the Secretary General.

In recent years, the UNDAF process has been seen as one of the key elements in the UN agencies response to the commitment to harmonization, simplification and country led development, which are exemplified by the Rome Declaration of OECD/DAC.

By 2003, the UNDAF and the Common Country Assessment or CCA (which serves as a key planning document) have evolved into a much more robust process aimed at producing UN programmes of cooperation that are commonly focused on a common and quite limited set of priorities. In the words of the *Guidelines for UN Country Teams: preparing a CCA and UNDAF in 2004:*

> CCAs provide the rationale for UN operations in the country concerned while the UNDAF indicates their strategic direction and expected results.
>
> Central is the agreement of the Government and the UNCT [United Nations Country Team] that the UN focus on three to five priorities selected from those challenges identified through the CCA process. The selection of these priorities should be driven by the collective comparative advantage of the UN system in addressing selected challenges identified in the CCA, as seen by the Government, the UNCT and its other partners. In short, <u>where can the UN system seeking development results together make the biggest difference?</u> These three to five priorities are reflected in a results matrix which, in addition to being the core of the signed UNDAF is also used and updated, as required, to guide and monitor progress of UN operations to achieve the planned results in the agreed three to five priority areas. The matrix also serves to identify areas for joint programming by two or more UN agencies, as well as for other partners. (p.4)

The guidelines are recent and were intended to guide the development of UNDAF's in 2004 so it remains to be seen if the degree of coherence, up to and including elements of common programming, intended will actually be achieved. Nonetheless, they point to an evolutionary process which will place considerable pressure on UNCT agencies to ensure their programmes focus on a common set of priorities and to contribute to monitoring a common set of results.

An External Evaluation of the Common Country Assessment and the UN Development Assistance Framework was carried out for the 2004 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of the Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System (2004 TCPR). That evaluation reported that the "The CCA and UNDAF together as a mechanism to coordinate the programmes and operational activities of the four funds and programmes know as the ExCom agencies are firmly in place" (p.59).

However, the evaluation also pointed out some tensions in the ongoing use of the CCA/UNDAF framework. More specifically the report noted that:

- Conceptually, the CCA/UNDAF as it is now structured fits the work of those UN agencies most directly focused on the MDGs and on the PRSP process. A choice will soon need to be made whether to further refine its use for the ExCom agencies somewhat to the exclusion of the specialized agencies of the UN, or to broaden the scope of CCA/UNDAF to better encompass the work of the specialized agencies and even the IFIs.
- There is some contradiction between the focus on the MDGs and the goal of making the process more country led. The key to dealing with this contradiction seems to arise from the PRSP process and a reasonable commitment by participating UN agencies to work in concert with the PRSP process.

- While donor governments tend to be very enthusiastic about the CCA/UNDAF framework and the strengthening of the UN Country Teams, many are somewhat impatient with the results achieved and have not done their part to arrest the decline in the resources available to UN development activities.

As an example of how further consolidation of the CCA/UNDAF framework might impact on evaluation, the Task Force on Simplification and Harmonization has noted that the UNDAF results matrix can be used to explain how the products and services achieved by UN agency country programmes contribute to *long term, common UN development results*. This can only be done, however, if the UNDAF results matrix clearly shows the relationship between individual agency programme outcomes and the UNDAF longer term outcomes and impacts.

In essence, the UNDAF established as common logical framework with a focus on a limited number of higher level commonly supported outcomes. It then delineates the clear alignment of the agency-specific and programmatic outcomes of all 26 agencies to the common UNDAF level outcomes. The UNDAF also includes a common format for the delineation of agency-specific Country Programme Action Plans.

Even in the latest iterations of the CCA/UNDAF framework, the individual programmes of cooperation between specific UN agencies and partner governments remain the basic framework for accountability and learning, especially considering that results must be reported to the Executive Boards of each specific agency. While the CCA/UNDAF framework includes a logic model establishing common outcomes and a link to agency-specific outcomes, it does not contain an accountability framework of its own**.** The resulting UNDAF therefore represents a structure for coordinated programming and not a joint UN programme. This is very important as it means that a fund like UNICEF remains relatively autonomous in evaluation and reporting terms and has the flexibility to be accountable to its Executive Board and to the non-government funding base that provides almost half of its resources.

2.3 Challenges for UNICEF-supported Country Programmes of Cooperation

UNICEF has a well established and widely recognized commitment to a country programme approach for planning and implementing its activities at country level. As noted in UNICEF's *Programme Policy and Procedure Manual (June 2004)*;

> The CP is more than just the sum of UNICEF assisted activities. It brings together, conceptually and operationally, all programmes as comprehensive, mutually supporting measures involving different sectors, partners and communities, and often different levels of government." p.19

The UNICEF CP approach encompasses three interlocking phases; programme preparation, programme implementation and programme evaluation. As noted in the manual, ownership of the Country Programme of Cooperation (CPC) should rest mainly with the country itself. At least in theory, this ownership extends beyond programme planning, to implementation and evaluation. As noted in the manual:

> There are no standard programme packages that are applied to all countries. Rather, in each country, programmes address those children's problems agreed to be important and strategically suitable for UNICEF cooperation (p.19).

In many ways, UNICEF has been closely involved in recent processes of change in the theory and practice of development cooperation, sometimes as a driver and key actor, and sometimes

in a reactive mode as change has originated elsewhere. In summarizing the different forces that are propelling and guiding the changes outlined above, it seems reasonable to divide them into two broad categories:

1. Changes emanating from a recognition of the rights of individuals and the desirability of meaningful participation by non-state actors if development cooperation is to be successful; and,

2. Changes emanating from the desire to simplify, harmonize and achieve *coherence* in all forms of development assistance (bilateral and multilateral and encompassing the UN) in order to reduce costs, improve effectiveness and ground the use of both external and internal resources in nationally owned policies and programmes.

While UNICEF has been a participant in efforts to make advances in the second category (e.g. the UNDAF process), it has made the greatest effort in the area of category of rights based approaches. Chapter 3 below discusses the integration of human rights into both programming and evaluation at UNICEF.

Perhaps the most important challenge of the rights revolution (to borrow a term used by Michael Ignatieff) is the requirement for UNICEF and other agencies to work constructively — even where rights are being abused — with governments, communities and individuals to identify the rights of rights holders and the responsibilities of duty bearers and to increase capacities on both sides so that rights can be fully realized.

Harmonization and coherence represents a larger challenge for UNICEF CPCs because it inevitably involves common processes and instruments of needs identification, strategy development, priority setting, and (to a greater or lesser extent) of programme design, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This problem becomes more evident when one takes a closer look at the UNICEF Country Programme planning process.

2.4   Implications for the country programme process

Importantly, since much of this common activity now takes place at a sectoral level, UNICEF CPCs will face pressure for integration well beyond the UN system. Indeed in many sectors (for example education) UNICEF is now faced with the need to be very closely coordinated (including joint evaluations) with global and regional international financial institutions and with bilateral development agencies providing support to the national programme and plan in the sector. In that sense, the natural lines of coordination and harmonization may point outside of rather than within the UN system. Even today, UNICEF is increasingly involved in joint evaluations with other agencies and governments at the country level — evaluations which may or may not involve intense involvement by other UN agencies.

Another challenge for UNICEF as it attempts to harmonize its planning, implementation and review mechanisms at country level with those of its partners concerns the very articulated and detailed nature of the established UNICEF processes. For example, the *Programme Policy and Procedure Manual (PPPM) revised in June 2004* describes the following steps in the preparation and documentation of a Country Programme planning cycle:

- Formulation by the UN Country Team (UNCT) and Government of a common workplan for preparation of new Country Programmes.

- Preparation of a Common Country Assessment (CCA) by the UNCT and Government.

- Preparation by the UNCT of a UN Development Assistance Framework.

- Preparation, with programme partners, of a strategy for the proposed Country Programme. The strategy, together with those prepared by other UN agencies for their Country Programmes, is discussed and agreed with key programme partners and senior UNICEF colleagues at the Joint Strategy Meeting.

- Preparation of the draft Country Programme Document (CPD), which reflects the agreed Strategy. After clearance by the Regional Director, the draft CPD is presented to the UNICEF Executive Board for consideration and comment.
- Preparation by the Country Office of the Country Programme Management Plan and Integrated Budget (CPMP/IB), which outlines the human and financial resources required for effective UNICEF support to the Country Programme. The CPMB and IB are reviewed and approved, with comments, during the UNICEF internal Programme Budget Review (PBR) meeting, held at regional level.
- Taking into account the comments of the Executive Board, the programme partners finalize the CPD and the details of the Country Programme of Action Plan (CPAP). The CP Results Matrix forms part of both documents. The CPAP also includes the Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and, where opted for, programme Logframes.
- The revised CPD and Summary Results Framework are posted on the UNICEF Extranet. Unless at least five members of the Executive Board wish to discuss again the proposed Country Programme, the Programme is considered approved, and on the advice of UNICEF HQ the CPAP can be signed by the UNICEF representative and the host Government. (p.33)

While the first four steps in the process are carried out jointly with other UN agencies, since they involve the CCA/UNDAF the remaining four major elements are carried out by UNICEF. It is also important to remember that the planning cycle represents one of three interlinked management cycles inherent in the UNICEF Country Programme Process. In addition, the Mid-Term Cycle includes the Mid-Term Review, the Mid-Term Management Review and modifications to the CPAP/CPMP if required as well as contributions to the UNDAF Evaluation. There is also an Annual Implementation Cycle which encompasses ongoing monitoring as well as an Annual Review, Annual Management Review and Annual Report.

Thus, while efforts have been made to streamline the Country Programme Process in recent years, it remains very intensive, with considerable involvement of partner Governments, NGOs, and UNICEF staff. In particular, UNICEF is the only UN agency still conducting an MTR with (normally) fairly detailed reviews of all projects and programmes. This seems somehow out of step with efforts to reduce transaction costs and rely more and more on accountability and results reporting mechanisms which are the purview of partners.

Of course, transaction costs should not be reduced beyond the point where they contribute to the effectiveness (including cost effectiveness) of programmes themselves. In that sense, the problem for UNICEF and its partners is to find the optimal level of investment in planning and accountability mechanisms so that they contribute more to the effectiveness of programmes than they cost in resource terms.

On the other hand, the MTR is seen at UNICEF as a key mechanism for ensuring the quality of programme design and development and for feeding mid-course corrections and revisions into the programme implementation process through the CPAP and CPMB. This presents two basic challenges for UNICEF:

- How to further streamline the programming, monitoring and evaluation process to reduce transaction costs, especially for partners? and,
- How to be more in tune with the programming approaches of national partners and other organizations providing external support as efforts are made to harmonize process for planning, monitoring and evaluation?

3. Human Rights Based Approach to Programming and Results Based Management at UNICEF

3.1 UNICEF's mission and human rights

UNICEF's mission is directly linked to the realization of human rights. Formal reference is made to the United Nations Charter, and, since 1997, to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its corollaries as well as to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). UNICEF formally adopted the Human Rights as its guiding principle for programming in 1998.

3.2 HRBAP guidance and implementation

UNICEF's experience with programming for the achievement of the human rights of children and women clearly did not start with Executive Directive CF/EXD 1998/04 which was issued in April 1998. As a matter of fact, since the adaptation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), UNICEF programming always focused on securing the rights of children and women. The multi-donor evaluation reported in 1992 that UNICEF country programmes focussed on three key programme areas:

- capacity development;
- assistance to state and non-state parties in service delivery;
- empowerment of children and women and the social organizations which represent them.

On the other hand, while the roots of UNICEF's commitment to HRBAP can be traced back to and beyond the CRC, the period since April 1998 is worth special attention.

The 1998 *Guidelines for Human Rights Based Programming Approach* can be seen as the opening salvo in an intensive process of development, support, refinement, experimentation and review which has taken place inside (and outside) UNICEF since that time. The process has produced important signals and signposts which can be used to situate and concretize the implications of HRBAP at UNICEF. These include:

- the guidelines themselves which set out fairly concretely many of the expected programming implications of an explicit commitment to HRBAP for UNICEF;
- the *Medium Term Strategic Plan for the Period 2002-2005* which identifies priorities for UNICEF support at country level and which explicitly draws a link between HRBAP and results-based management including the development and implementation of the Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan;
- material produced for and discussed at the First Global Consultation – Human Rights Based Approach to Programming in Tanzania in August 2002;
- the *Programme Policy and Procedure Manual - 2000* (being revised continuously, and last updated in June 2004) which further elaborates on the implications of HRBAP at the country programme level and discusses the different categories of results which should be defined and monitored;
- *The Human Rights Based Approach: Towards a Common Understanding Among the UN Agencies* resulting from the Interagency Workshop on a Human Rights Based Approach in the context of UN reform, 3-5 May 2003. The reporting document identifies characteristics which are common to all good programming along with those which are unique to HRBAP[1];

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[1] Participating agencies included DESA, FAO, ILO, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFP, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNIFEM, UNODC, UNSCC, WFA, WHO and WFP.

- The review of progress in HRBAP *Moving Ahead with Human Rights – Assessment of the Operationalization of the Human Rights Based Approach in UNICEF Programming: 2002* prepared by Caroline and Annalise Moser and published in August, 2003; and
- Material presented and discussed at the Second Global Consultations on HRBAP held in Quito in September 2003 which included case studies of implementing HRBAP in country programmes as well as papers on evaluation and HRBAP.

There is some evidence in the work done by UNICEF and others at both a headquarters and country programme level to indicate that the form and content of country programmes can change through the proper application of HRBAP (although the evidence of how much has changed at country level still needs to be collected and collated). At the same time, reviews of the progress of HRBAP at UNICEF have pointed out that application of the approach at field level has by and large been uneven and in many places incomplete. UNICEF still faces the challenge of proving both the feasibility and the added value of HRBAP at an operational level.

If this is to happen, UNICEF will need to develop approaches for credibly evaluating Human Rights Based Programmes which first requires isolating the components which are unique to HRBAP.

As the *common understanding* paper points out:

> The application of good programming practices does not by itself constitute a human rights based approach, and requires additional elements.

The following elements are necessary, specific and unique to a human rights based approach:
(1) assessment and analysis identify the human rights claims of rights-holders and the corresponding human rights obligations of duty-bearers as well as the immediate, underlying and structural causes of the non-realization of rights;
(2) Programmes assess the capacity of rights-holders to claim their rights and of duty bearers to fulfil these obligations. They then develop strategies to build these capacities.
(3) Programmes monitor and evaluate both outcomes and processes guided by human rights standards and principles.
(4) Programming is informed by the recommendations of international human rights bodies and mechanisms.

These four elements rather neatly encapsulate much of the material developed at UNICEF regarding HRBAP. They highlight the concept of rights-holders and duty bearers (and individuals may be both a rights-holder and a duty bearer), the pre-eminent importance of capacity development, the link to human rights standards and processes (in UNICEF's case, the CRC and CEDAW committees) and the role of international human rights bodies and mechanism.

Whether or not Country Programme Evaluation represents an effective strategy for evaluating and strengthening HRBAP at UNICEF depends on whether HRBAP is seen as being applied through the overall strategic cast and direction of a Country Programme or through specific sub-components, sub-programmes and projects. Given the cross cutting nature of the approach (it should apply to all UNICEF and partner country programming) it seems fairly clear that realistically evaluating the application and impact of HRBAP will require assessing the most strategically important programme components. At the same time, the CPC will need to be addressed as an integrated effort to address human rights rather than a collection of projects, some of which focus on Human Rights while others do not.

3.3   Results Based Management at UNICEF

UNICEF has made an effort to develop the tools for designing programmes and projects in a manner consistent with results based management (RBM) practices. Since the inception of HRBAP there has also been a link established between the two commitments (HRBAP and RBM). Indeed, the Medium Term Strategic Plan 2002-2005 discusses both on the same page and states that "the key strategy for a broad-based strengthening of UNICEF capacity to advance its performance – towards the organization priorities and in all of its actions – is to ensure that effective results-based management practices function throughout the organization" (p.37).

Similarly, the Programme Policy and Procedure Manual (pp. 58-67.) includes a discussion of methods and tools for using results based approaches to design and country programmes. It encompasses results definition, the use of logical framework templates, the definition of indicators and their use as a key input to the Integrated Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Plan (IMEP) in a shared accountability tool for UNICEF and partner governments.

There has also been work done to develop tools for use under the IMEP including a summary results matrix by UNICEF priority, and a summary table format for five year evaluation activity planning.

While much has been done to develop tools at the front end of the RBM spectrum, for use in programme and project design and evaluation planning, there remains much to be done at UNICEF to systematically implement RBM at the country level. The IMEP lays out the basis for planning evaluation activities and linking them to programme design at country level. On the other hand, it does not yet encompass a systematic process for determining the data to be gathered and the frequency and content of performance monitoring reports or the interface between ongoing performance (results) monitoring and periodic evaluation.

A key task facing UNICEF in determining the appropriate balance between evaluation and performance monitoring in the context of HRBP will be to decide how much it wishes to invest in terms of training, tools development and management time in the development of ongoing performance monitoring at country programme level. As described in the PPPM, RBM and the IMEP are integrated in terms of tools for the planning of evaluation and research. This means that periodic evaluations cannot be grounded in a baseline and time series of results reporting, which in turn makes evaluations more comprehensive in scope, more time consuming and more expensive.

3.4   Results Based Management in the context of UNDAF

UNICEF is represented in the UNDAF Simplification and Harmonization Task Force by Programme Division and the Division of Policy and Planning. At the same time, the Evaluation Office actively contributes to the Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group which reports to the Task Force on S&H. The Evaluation Office has invested considerable effort in developing guidelines and methods for linking RBM at the CPC level directly to the UNDAF Results Matrix and has provided training to Country Office staff in this area.

The *Guidelines for UN Country Teams preparing a CCA and UNDAF in 2004* indicate fairly specifically how the UNDAF Results Matrix is to be linked to the individual agency's country programmes and projects. According to the guidelines, there are three major linkages which must be addressed through the programming process:

- *UNDAF outcomes*: The strategic focus of country projects will be determined from among the expected outcomes in the UNDAF.
- *Country programme/project outcomes:* the outcomes of individual agencies country programmes/projects describe the intended results, which contribute to the UNDAF outcomes. This will ensure that the results of country programmes and projects are linked with the expected outcomes in the UNDAF.
- *Country programme/project outputs:* The outputs of country programmes/projects are the specific products and/or services for which UN agencies are to be accountable, and which contribute to the expected outcomes of the country programme/project, as well as to the UNDAF outcomes. The outputs from different country programmes will be more complementary and together lead to the achievement of the UNDAF outcomes. It is also desirable that the ground level programmes and projects of each UN agency be meaningfully related to those of other UN agencies actively working in the same area. (p. 30-31).

The UNDAF guidelines take a similar approach to UNICEF's CPPM in that they focus primarily on the process of programme and project design and the definition of outputs and outcomes at the project, programme and UNDAF level. While there is some material on indicators of MDG goals to be used in the CCA, the UNDAF guidelines are largely silent on the responsibilities and processes to be used for gathering information and reporting on outputs and outcomes at the project, programme and UNDAF level. The downstream end of the RBM process seems to be somewhat lacking from the UNDAF guidelines.

There are some efforts ongoing to map out the process of evaluating UNDAFS including the recent development of a set of draft *UNDAF Evaluation – Guidelines for Terms of Reference.*

The draft guidelines are the subject of ongoing debate and revision so a detailed examination at this point may not be worthwhile. It seems clear, however, that UNDAF evaluations will need to build upon reasonably complete and accurate results monitoring systems established by individual UN agencies and their partners. Similarly, the quality of Country Programme Evaluations carried out jointly by UN agencies and their partners will be one of the main determining factors in the quality of UNDAF evaluations. Finally, the role of national governments in UNDAF evaluations still needs to be worked out but it seems likely that they will play a central role in the governance and guidance of these evaluations.

It remains to be seen how well the UNDAF's prepared in 2004 have begun to incorporate the ambitions outlined above. In particular, it will be important to see how UNICEF country offices contribute to the definition of country programme outcomes and their relation to the UNDAF priorities and how these are monitored and reported over time.

At this point in time, however, it remains true that most of UNICEF's work on RBM has focused on defining programme results and, in particular, identifying priority outcomes at the CPC level. Much more can be done to ensure ongoing collection of key indicator data as a baseline for periodic evaluation at country level.

4. Monitoring and evaluation at UNICEF

Evaluation at UNICEF is specifically designed as one element in a wider set of oversight functions, all intended to support the Medium Term Strategic Plan. As noted in the report on the evaluation function in the context of the MTSP (E/ICEF/2002/10), the five key oversight functions at UNICEF include:

- management performance monitoring and reporting;
- internal and external audit;
- investigation;
- evaluation; and,
- research.

In the words of the 2004 *Progress Report on the Evaluation Function in UNICEF,* "It is important to understand that the evaluation function is not an inspection, nor is it an audit. It should not be confused with performance monitoring, *which is a function of self assessment and reporting done by management* [emphasis added]. Finally, one should not expect the evaluation function to fulfil the role of academic research.

The progress report also points out that there are currently no common detailed norms and standards that govern the evaluation function within the United Nations system, but evaluations do follow norms and standards developed by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (DAC/OECD) and of several national evaluation societies.

In organizational terms, the evaluation function is strongly decentralized throughout UNICEF's structure, a feature which has received strong endorsement from the Executive Board. The 2004 progress report described the structure of evaluation at UNICEF as follows:

> In UNICEF, country offices conduct most evaluation studies in collaboration with national partners. Regional offices provide oversight and support for evaluations undertaken by country offices and in particular, oversee the methodological rigour of the evaluations of country programmes. Regional offices also conduct thematic evaluations related to their regional strategies which involve multiple countries in the region. Headquarters divisions and offices undertake evaluations related to their areas of expertise. Finally, the Evaluation Office provides functional leadership and overall management of the evaluation system, and conducts independent evaluations. (p.4).

In terms of human resources, the complement of evaluation personnel at UNICEF is quite substantial with (as of 2004) a reported 114 staff members responsible for monitoring and evaluation activities, including 54 full-time incumbents of monitoring and evaluation positions. The 60 who are not full time act as monitoring and evaluation focal points who allocate part of their time to M & E duties. Of the 144 UNICEF staff involved in monitoring and evaluation, 61 are national officers and 53 are international professionals.

It is important to note, however, M&E staff, including full time staff, spend considerable time in non-evaluation tasks. The 2004 Progress Report noted that a survey at regional level indicated that monitoring and evaluation staff allocated only about 20% of their time to evaluations. They are also responsible for working in support of situation analysis, household surveys, programme performance monitoring, planning, quality assurance and representation. (p.4)

Nonetheless, there is a great deal of evaluation activity within the UNICEF system. In 2002/2003, the Progress Report notes that there were 2,345 evaluative exercises noted in the research and evaluation database. Of those, 576 were full scale evaluation reports as opposed to surveys or research studies.

It is worth considering at this point the question of how UNICEF's system of evaluation is able to deliver high quality and relevant evaluation information in support of management decision making.

4.1   The quality and relevance of evaluations at UNICEF

UNICEF, through its Evaluation Office has invested some considerable effort in monitoring the quality, relevance and use of evaluations it undertakes at the project, programme and regional levels. The Evaluation Office commissioned an external Meta-evaluation of the quality of evaluations supported by Country Offices over the period 2000-2001 which was completed in June of 2003. That study examined 50 percent of the evaluation reports submitted by country offices in 2000 and 2001 along with a smaller sample of Terms of Reference and a survey to a random sample of half of UNICEF country offices.

After a process of review and consultations with M & E officers within UNICEF, the Evaluation Office presented a Summary and Proposed Next Steps document to agency senior management. The document *Evaluation of the Quality of Evaluations Supported by UNICEF Country Offices, 2000-2001: Summary and Proposed Next Steps* summarized the results of the meta-evaluation as follows:

Key Findings

One in five evaluations was found to be excellent, in most cases associated with joint evaluation efforts. Notable strengths of UNICEF co-supported evaluations were: framing evaluations with clear realistic objectives, analysis of context, analysis of relevance of programmes, and overall presentation of results.

The findings of the Meta-evaluation however, present a grim picture in general. One third of evaluations reviewed were sufficiently poor across all parameters to be considered a serious problem. These are roughly the same results as found in 1994. One third or more evaluations demonstrated critical weaknesses:

- Weak distinction between and linking of inputs and outputs as well as outcomes (one third);
- Significant enough problems with methodology that results could be challenged - sampling design, data collection instruments, description of constraints, (at least half of evaluations for each of these issues);
- Cost analysis unacceptable or absent;
- Missing basic components of presentation necessary for use by others outside the CO and stakeholders immediately involved (one third of reports);

Further, it seems that likely that the weaknesses in evaluation are related to poorly developed Terms of Reference: just under two-thirds of Country Offices reported important weaknesses in the quality of evaluation Terms of Reference. Follow-up was also noted as a concern, not because it does not happen as this could not be documented, but rather because it is not transparent: three quarters of Country Offices reported that no record was kept on follow-up. Finally, in terms of overall planning, it was noted that despite the volume of evaluation there is a widely held perception that important areas of programming are not evaluated enough. (pp. 4-5)

The meta-evaluation obviously had serious implications for the quality and relevance of many evaluation studies conducted at country office level by UNICEF. As the Evaluation Office report pointed out: "The findings suggest that UNICEF is not getting the evaluative information it needs to demonstrate results for children or to improve programmes." (p.5) In essence the report points to three key problems:

- A large number of reports of inadequate quality;
- Uneven coverage of critical programme areas by evaluation exercises; and,
- Significant evaluation resources expended without adequate results.

It should be noted that the Evaluation Office presented a follow-up action plan and further reported on its progress in addressing these problems in the *Progress Report on the Evaluation Function in UNICEF.*

4.2 Improving the relevance, quality and strategic use of the evaluation function

In the 2004 Progress Report, the Evaluation Office noted a series of steps it had instituted to improve both the quality and relevance of evaluations. These included efforts to:

- improve the planning of evaluations by incorporating them more closely into programme planning and to better focus evaluation resources on priority questions of decision makers;
- improve the management of the evaluation process;
- improve evaluation design; and
- ensure better evaluation follow-up.

The sought-for improvements were to be achieved through strengthening in-country evaluation capacities (the capacity of national partners and stakeholders; strengthening the evaluation capacity of UNICEF country offices; strengthening the capacity of regional offices; and, strengthening the HQ Evaluation Office.

One of the key process initiatives was the creation in 2003 of the Evaluation Committee with a mandate to review evaluation reports that have relevance at the global governance level of UNICEF. The committee reviews the work of the Evaluation Office and its implementation and advises the Executive Director on decision-making resulting from evaluation related matters.

In 2004 there were also a number of workshops and training exercises for M & E officers throughout UNICEF where the question of how to improve standards of evaluation received considerable attention.

The initiatives taken in 2003 and 2004 may or may not succeed in dramatically improving the quality and relevance of evaluations when so many are undertaken across the system in any given year with varying levels of resources and professionalism. It seems clear that an

evaluation strategy which called for UNICEF to undertake rather fewer evaluation studies, more clearly linked to strategic decisions at a programme level and with higher quality for each evaluation would have more chance of success than a general effort to improve evaluation capacity across the board (although the latter remains an ongoing function of the Evaluation Office). How to be more selective and to introduce more quality seems to be the problem for UNICEF.

In addressing this problem, one very strong guidepost can be found in the Meta-evaluations finding that the one third of evaluations of relatively high quality are most often joint *evaluations* carried out with other agencies and with governments and other national partners. It seems that the effect of entering into evaluation activities with a wider set of partners is to introduce a higher level of quality and rigour into the UNICEF system.

In searching for solutions to how to ensure more relevant and higher quality evaluation efforts at UNICEF it will be important to keep the following factors in mind:

- At a time when so many processes and drivers of change (see section 2.1) are pointing to the urgent need for harmonized and coordinated (and very often joint) programming and evaluation, the bulk of UNICEF evaluation resources and activities are focused not at the level even of UNICEF supported country programmes of cooperation. Rather, country offices are concentrating on the evaluation of projects and activities within those programmes. With relevance more and more defined in terms of MDGs, of national PRSPs, and country-led sectoral programming, the relevance of project evaluations specific to UNICEF's CPC will diminish both internally and externally. As the Greentree Report points out, the perception of isolated and uncoordinated UN activities at country level (including evaluation activities) is contributing to the UN's failure to secure a reasonable portion of the donor resources committed to reaching the MDGs.

- HRBAP has pointed to the need for programmes which are grounded in a systematic analysis of the human rights claims of rights holders and the corresponding human rights obligations of duty-bearers as well as the immediate, underlying and structural causes of the non-realization of rights. While some of these causes may occur at a community or district level, most will require a reasonable assessment of national capacities and national causes of non-realization of rights. They will also involve UNICEF in collaborative efforts with other UN organizations, with bilateral donors and with civil society and, of course, with partner governments in assessing national systems and programmes for addressing human rights. None of this seems to lend itself to country office led evaluations of projects with their wide variations in quality and their concentration on project-specific relevance. [Interesting new idea.]

- With so many change processes focussing on national programmes and joint programme planning, implementation and evaluation there is a very real possibility (although it falls very far short of being an assured outcome) that donors and other development agencies will follow through on their promise to take part in genuinely country-led processes of monitoring and evaluation. If this is to happen, partner countries will need to develop much stronger capacities in evaluation and will not be willing to use the limited capacity they have to become involved in a series of project specific evaluations limited only to sub-elements of their programme of cooperation with UNICEF.

This challenge can be illustrated very easily with the case of support to education. With more and more education support channelled in support of national sector plans and programmes, partner countries will more and more insist on a single evaluation and monitoring system in the sector to which they can contribute both technical skills and a major role in governance. In that environment, why would a partner country devote senior management time and staff resources to an evaluation of one agencies contribution?

While Country Programme Evaluation remains in a testing phase at UNICEF, and while it faces challenges in terms of time and resource requirements, it has the clear advantage of being adaptable to these factors which encourage all development cooperation agencies and government to take a higher-level approach to assessing results; an approach which is national in scope and encompasses the efforts of a wide-range of actors. In such an environment UNICEF-specific project evaluations suffer from two major weaknesses: they are too small and too numerous to allow for meaningful quality assurance and support and they are less and less relevant to UNICEF and its partners who must deal with evaluation issues more and more at a national level.

5. CPE and its potential

Section 4.2 above presents the argument that Country Programme Evaluations have the potential to improve the quality and relevance of UNICEF evaluation activities by concentrating agency evaluation resources on a smaller set of higher quality evaluations with a national scope. That argument may represent a strong incentive to continue efforts to experiment with and strengthen CPE practice at UNICEF but it leaves several questions unanswered.

- How can CPE fit into and contribute to the established Country Programme process at UNICEF?
- What circumstances would give rise to the need to carry out a Country Programme Evaluation?
- How does CPE relate to and strengthen HRBAP?
- How can CPE contribute to the CCA/UNDAF process and wider efforts at development cooperation?

The first three questions are specific to UNICEF and its approach and are dealt with in this section, while the last is general to the UN system and other agencies and partners and is the subject of section 6.0 below.

5.1 CPE and the UNICEF country programme process

As already noted, the UNICEF Country Programme Process consists of a very well articulated and detailed set of steps relating to context analysis, programme development and design, programme implementation and to monitoring and evaluation. The *Programme Policy and Procedure Manual (2004)* describes three main stages: preparation, implementation and evaluation. Since these stages take place over a cycle of up to five years, they in turn encompass three individual but interlinked cycles: the CP Planning Cycle, the Mid-Term Cycle and the Annual Implementation Cycle (p.32).

The PPPM (p.34) describes an illustrative standard three year country programme preparation timeline which begins in year three of the standard five year programme life cycle and which includes the following steps:

Year Three
- Mid-Term Review Preparation, Meeting and Report
- Annual Report for Year Three

Year Four
- UNDAF Evaluation
- Submission of the MTR to the Executive Board of UNICEF
- Country Programme Plan Work plan agreed by the UNCT and Government
- Preparation of the Common Country Assessment (CCA) by UNCT and Government
- UNDAF Preparation and Report by UNCT
- Annual Review (UNICEF)
- Annual Report

Year Five
- Preparation by UNICEF with partners of a Country Programme Strategy
- Joint Strategy Meeting (uses UNDAF Results Matrix)
- Draft Country Programme Document and Clearance by the Regional Director

- Preparation (Country Office) of the Country Programme Management Plan and Integrated Budget (CPMP/IB)
- Regional UNICEF Programme Budget Review Meeting
- Receipt of Comments on the Country Programme Document from the Executive Board
- Finalize the CPD and Develop the Country Programme Action Plan which encompasses the CP Results Matrix and the Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
- Signature of the Country Programme Action Plan by UNICEF Representative and host Government
- Annual Review
- Annual Report

Thus, during the standard three year country programme preparation timeline, there will be three major review and evaluative exercises; the MTR and two annual reviews (in an MTR year the annual review may be subsumed under the MTR). There will also be ongoing project and programme evaluations as required at the Country Office level and many of these will be timed to support the MTR and/or the annual reviews. This is all in addition to data gathering and analysis activities for the Common Country Assessment. The PPPM also makes it clear that "In situations where the preparation of the CCA has been delayed, Country Offices should ensure that a new Situation Analysis of children and women is being undertaken, or that at a minimum the previous SITAN has been updated in time for the Country Programme Preparation Process. (p.34)

This multi-year planning process is clearly meant to begin with the Mid-Term Review preparation, meeting and report. In fact, the PPPM makes it clear that the MTR is both the cornerstone of the CPP and a major evaluative event for the Country Programme.

The PPPM describes the purposes of the MTR as to:
- Examine how the experience of the CP, at approximately its mid-point, can be used by national partners to improve policies and programmes for the rights of children and women;
- Based on a systematic and in-depth review of progress in relation to original CP objectives and expected results, identify and make provisions for mid-course adjustments in the key elements of the CP design as approved by the Executive Board and established in the CPAP;
- Assess whether modifications in the CP results, strategies and content, the distribution of funds between programmes, the CPAP, or the CPMP are warranted as a result of:
  - Changes in the countries environment and the situation of children and women;
  - New insights and experiences gained in the first half of the programme cycle;
  - Changes in the programme environment (e.g. expected partner contributions not coming forward; new emerging partnerships; changes in access and logistics);
  - Changes in national or UNICEF policies and priorities as expressed, for instance, in the PRSP or the MTSP, or as emerging from the reporting process on the CRC.
- Derive major lessons learned so as to improve the quality of programme implementation;
- Indicate how these lessons may be applied to the subsequent CP for children and women. (p.85)

Thus the MTR is meant to serve both as a direct monitoring tool (comparing progress against targets) for the current CP and as an important influence on the shape and content of the subsequent CP. Not surprisingly, the MTR often incorporates a number of project and programme evaluations and is, in itself, described as a major evaluative activity. The PPMP makes this point very clear.

The MTR is typically the most substantial of all review exercises in a Country Programme and *should be as structured, rigorous and focused* [emphasis added] as any evaluation. (p.85)

The PPPM then goes on to describe some of the key factors which should be considered in designing an MTR including the purpose, evaluation objectives, priority questions, stakeholder involvement, sources of data, methods of data collection and types of analysis. In many ways, the design of an MTR seems to resemble the design of a comprehensive evaluation of the Country Programme.

In fact, however, the MTR is meant to draw on an ongoing process of monitoring and evaluation and to be informed by monitoring reports, evaluative activities and reviews and evaluation reports taking place at the project and programme (sub-components of the CP) level. The MTR also differs somewhat from a comprehensive Country Programme Evaluation in that it focuses on three levels: UNICEF's own performance; the shared performance and achievements of Country Programme Partners; and the quality of both outcomes/impacts and processes. (p.86)

While MTRs resemble Country Programme Evaluations in many ways, the PPPM also recognizes that they differ sufficiently to distinguish between them. In contrast to the standard MTR:

A CPE is externally facilitated and broad in scope. A CPE focuses on information needed for strategic decision making and improving overall CP performance. The CPE will not lead to lessons and recommendations at the level of projects and activities; it will rather focus at the level of the strategic contribution of the UNICEF-assisted CP to the evolving *situation of children's and women's rights*. CP goals will be reviewed in relation to the MTSP targets, the national and UNDAF goals and the national report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The CPE will give attention to questions of relevance.

The PPPM (July 2004) makes the point that Country Programme Evaluation could be the form chosen for the methodology of an MTR. In other words, the CPE would not replace the MTR but would be a means of achieving an MTR in special circumstance. This would seem to argue against conducting both an MTR and a CPE in a given programme cycle either in parallel or in sequence.

This position seems to have been given further credence by the experience of the Evaluation Office as it has supported pilot efforts to implement Country Programme Evaluations. Where those pilots have coincided with MTRs they have been viewed by Country Offices as additions or add-ons to the MTR process and have thus been in danger of either duplicating, overlapping with or contradicting the already demanding (for UNICEF and its partners) process of the MTR.

If, as seems likely, CPE can make a strong contribution to both programme design and accountability at the country office level at UNICEF (and improve the quality of Country Office led evaluations) it seems that it may best do this as a special type of MTR (or as a special means of achieving the goals of the MTR).

Indeed, it seems clear that there is really very little justification in any country programme to conduct both an MTR and a Country Programme Evaluation. The CPE should be undertaken in circumstances where an MTR will not meet the changing needs of the country programme. Over time, CPE may come to be seen as reducing the complexity of the MTR process, at least from the perspective of other members of the UN Country Team since its evaluation outputs will fit more directly into UNDAF evaluations than the normal products of an MTR.

One of the strongest lessons of the pilot testing work on CPEs at UNICEF seems to be the recognition that a decision needs to be made during the country programme process to conduct either an MTR or a full Country Programme Evaluation.
This, in turn begs the question of when is a CPE called for as the means of achieving the goals of the MTR.

The experience of the pilot CPE teams suggests that country programme evaluation with its external support and broader perspective is most needed when circumstances clearly suggest that there is a need to considerable re-orient the Country Programme from its current directions or to develop a succeeding CP which is very different in its strategic direction than the one being implemented at the time of the MTR. In other words, a "traditional" MTR may be the best means of taking stock of progress in the CP if evolutionary change is the most that is expected from the transition from one CP to the next.

In a significant number of countries however, the context and situation may change radically because of:

- A dramatic change in the situation of children and women (i.e. as a result of HIV/AIDS;
- A major change in national policies toward children and women which gives rise to radically new opportunities for programming (i.e. the new Family Code in Morocco or the PRSP[2] in Tanzania);
- Special opportunities for organizational learning which may arise from an unusually innovative Country Programme Strategy;
- Major new opportunities for increased funding of UNICEF/host government programmes or a sudden diminishing of funding; or
- Demand for a CPE which originates either from the host country or from external agencies providing significant support to the Country Programme of Cooperation.

In theory, the MTR process could encompass the situations outlined above, but it can be argued that these special circumstances require both a more strategic focus and the involvement of qualified external evaluators in order to provide a strong rationale for subsequent re-orientation of the country programme.

Clearly, CPEs which are more intensive draw on more external resources and may undertake more in-depth evaluation methods may be seen as an expensive means of carrying out an MTR. On the other hand, there are some counter-arguments which suggest that CPEs can be cost effective.

- CPEs may be more expensive to carry out than a standard MTR but they can be high-yield evaluative exercises which will provide a much stronger rationale for a significantly re-oriented programme;
- CPEs may gain more support from and be more in-tune with the M & E efforts of national and major external partners than standard MTRs. They may thus be a means of attracting support to the newly oriented CP;
- CPEs may reduce or eliminate the need for frequent, relatively low quality and low utility project evaluations as diagnosed in the Meta-evaluation;
- CPE should be no more consuming of partner time and effort than the standard MTR process and should reduce the transaction costs represented by many individual project evaluations; and,

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[2] Of course not all PRSP documents represent a major change in national policies. UNICEF and its partners will need to make a determination of whether a given PRSP provides for a significant change in national policies and priorities for children and women.

- It is much easier for the Regional Offices and the Evaluation Office at HQ to provide ongoing technical support and quality assurance to a small number of high-quality Country Programme Evaluations than to the hundreds of project evaluations done each year.

In summary, where the situation warrants it, it seems that use of the Country Programme Evaluation as a means of achieving the goals of the MTR holds out the promise of improving the quality and relevance of the evaluation function while integrating effectively with UNICEF's Country Programme Planning process.

5.2 Country Programme Evaluation and HRBAP

a) The changing face of evaluation under HRBAP – essential evaluation questions

There is some debate over the extent to which evaluation must change at UNICEF and elsewhere if it is to fully contribute to effective programming under HRBAP. Some argue that an organization such as UNICEF is committed by definition to the promotion of the human rights of women and children and, as a result, the HRBAP cannot be compared to other approaches to securing the same or similar development results. As Urban Jonsson and Richard Morgan point out in their discussion paper for the Quito Consultation: "As a norm, it is not relevant to ask whether the HRBAP can justify itself in terms of, for example, achieving "better" developmental results than may be the case with other approaches".

More traditional evaluation specialists have argued that HRBAP may be normative, yet it still represents a different way for organizations such as UNICEF to marshal, organize, and deploy resources in support of development and, as such, would need to demonstrate somehow its comparative advantages in doing so. Indeed, the proponents of HRBAP have frequently argued that it is more "effective" than other modes of programming for development because it is inherently more sustainable.

At the end of the day, it may be that the gap between HRBAP as a norm in and of itself and HRBAP as a modality for development programming is not as large as one might assume since both imply a similar set of questions. By combining a logic chain approach with the questions raised in Jonsson/Morgan (2003) one can develop a set of sequential evaluation questions which seem to be reasonably true to "classical" evaluation practice and to a commitment to Human Rights as an end result or goal state. The primary evaluation questions would then be posed as:

- Is there evidence that since the baseline year of 1998 UNICEF programming at country level has evolved towards realization of a human-rights based approach to programming? Is it exhibiting the changes in content and process, which could reasonably be expected as the HRBAP is more fully realized?
- As HRBAP has been adopted, has it been accompanied by an improvement in the quality of UNICEF programming practices, especially those relating to the four unique features of HRBAP? These include:
  - Assessment and analysis of the claims and obligations of rights holders and duty bearers an the immediate, underlying and structural causes of non-realization;
  - Assessment and development of the capacities of rights holders and duty bearers;
  - Monitoring and evaluation of outcomes and processes;
  - Informed by recommendations of international human rights bodies and mechanisms.
- Are process and outcome results achieved through the application of HRBAP sustainable? To the extent that it can be assessed, has the shift to HRBAP helped in the achievement of more sustainable changes in the capacity of rights holders and duty bearers?

- Has the emphasis on capacity development for duty bearers and rights holders resulted in verifiable improvements in capacity with short, medium or long term outcomes for children and women?

b) Other implications for evaluation

As well a giving rise to a somewhat (but not entirely) different set of evaluation issues and questions, HRBAP will have some important practical implications for evaluation at UNICEF. These are shared in the experience of other UN agencies, bilateral agencies and NGOs which have written on the challenge of assessing the results and impacts of rights-based approaches to programming. They include:

- the necessity of linking programme level evaluations to national and local data reporting on human rights attainment to relevant committees (especially CRC and CEDAW);
- the necessity to provide technical support (and advocacy) to national monitoring of human rights conditions and results;
- the necessity to develop SMART objectives, results statements and indicators which can validate changes in national and local *processes* as well as outcomes;
- the complex issues of evaluating changes in capacity (especially in relation to sustainability); and,
- the necessity to use evaluation methods and processes which are in keeping with UNICEF's commitment to human rights and participation.[3]

The literature on evaluation and HRBAP both inside and outside UNICEF raises a series of issues concerning the purpose of evaluation (evaluating human rights on their own normative turf or as an instrument for securing other development outcomes, or both) and its more mundane practices (how to develop verifiable indicators of, for example, sustainable change in legislative processes). Interestingly, none argue that there is a fundamental barrier to the fruitful application of evaluation as a means of improving the effectiveness of programming under HRBAP.

Virtually all the documents reviewed and specialists interviewed agree that HRBAP is meant to produce verifiable results in terms of changes in processes, changes in the capacities of rights holders and duty bearers and changes in the ability of children and women to secure and enjoy their rights as defined in CRC and CEDAW. In other words, a commitment to HRBAP is also a commitment to achieve sustainable results: to do the right thing but in an effective and sustainable manner. While it may result in new questions and technical challenges, it is surely a commitment which can benefit from the application of evaluation as a tool for improving effectiveness.

5.3   The added value of CPE in HRBAP

As already noted, project evaluations at the country office level suffer from uneven quality and, perhaps more importantly, often fail to develop lessons learned and findings which are relevant outside the specific project or activity being evaluated – even within the same country programme. It would appear that even when UNICEF Country Programmes are addressing human rights at a community level, there is a need for a wider frame of reference than just specific project activities if lessons of wider relevance are to be learned.

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[3] This does not imply a total revolution in the way UNICEF conducts evaluations. As pointed out in some detail in *Evaluation Technical Notes; No 1 – April 2002,* UNICEF has developed practical guidelines for effective and responsible participation of children in research, monitoring and evaluation.

This would seem to argue that Country Programme Evaluations, since they would be fewer in number and could be better supported by headquarters and regional expertise and technical assistance, could address some of the quality issues noted in the review of evaluations. At the same time, they could encompass specific actions to evaluate community focused human rights programming and could place the lessons learned in those activities in a wider national and international perspective.

On the other hand, especially in Eastern and Southern African Region, UNICEF has implemented HRBAP mostly at the community level. These experiences should be evaluated at their own level, unless there are major benefits in a broader context, e.g. under decentralisation policies. A CPE would look at the implications of community focused HRBAP in a broader context, their potential links to existing policies and strategies (e.g. decentralisation of political and administrative power and responsibilities), their "replicability" in other geographical areas and their significance for advocacy and dialogues on national policies (mainstreaming). Community experiences would hence be assessed in terms of their value as "demonstration projects" or to provide lessons learned for strategic decision making and direction setting at the national level for UNICEF and its partners (including external partners).

UNICEF has more experience in assessing and evaluating HRBAP at the community than at the national level. Indeed, it is fair to say that evaluation of HRBAP at the national level is still rather under-developed. CPE could play an important part in strengthening evaluation of HRBAP by focusing on the outcomes of efforts which are national in scope and which are intended to influence, for example, national legislation, legal practice, distribution of budgetary resources and/or national policies in critical rights areas. As one practical example, a Country Programme Evaluation in Ecuador might focus on assessing the impact of "social observatories" on voting on national budgeting in the national Parliament.

Similarly, the broader, holistic view of the CPE would allow the evaluation team to establish linkages between different parts of the CP and the whole CP as to its HRBAP content and process. To put it another way, CPE could directly focus on how the Country Programme Strategy encompassed HRBAP and how that influenced the content and direction of different elements of the CP.

At a more micro level, Country Programme Evaluations may also strengthen the HRBAP approach by serving as a tool for capacity development to strengthen the national evaluation culture and improve evaluation performance on the part of host country governments.

CPE could also serve to empower families, communities, local governments and civil society organizations to have a clearer voice in the evaluation of UNICEF supported programming and to convey their judgements to UNICEF and its partners. This latter benefit would require UNICEF and the partner organizations to work much harder to include stronger consultative mechanisms than have been tried during the pilot CPEs. It raises the question of how open are UNICEF's partner organizations to meaningful participation by the community in an evaluation of their performance.

6. CPE and UNDAF evaluation in the wider national context

6.1 Supporting UNDAF evaluation

In theory, at least, there is no requirement for either a Mid-Term Review or a Country Programme Evaluation as the basis for UNICEF's participation in and contribution to UNDAF evaluations. This is especially true since the other UN agencies contributing to the UNDAF evaluation do not have an MTR as an element in their programming cycles (although some do have Country Programme Evaluations).

The draft *UNDAF Evaluation Guidelines for Terms of Reference* of August, 2004 suggest that UNDAF Evaluation should use the standard OECD/DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of results and that it will be based on ongoing monitoring and performance data gathered by and reported by UN Country Team agencies and by national partners. In that sense, UNICEF and other UNCT agencies may be most concerned with the quality of ongoing results monitoring carried out jointly with national partners in order to make the strongest possible contribution to the UNDAF evaluation.

On the other hand, where UNICEF has carried out a CPE, it could make a strong contribution to the documentary base which will be one of the key information sources of the UNDAF evaluation, although this would also be true of a well structured MTR report.

6.2 CPE, harmonization, and country-led programming

If CPE at UNICEF is to be effective in the context of changing practice it will need to be flexible enough to contribution to the need for evaluation to be country led and to contribute to development planning and programming practices which go well beyond the UN system in their scope and focus? Some of the ways which evaluation at country level is being drawn into the new "ways of doing development cooperation" envisaged in the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus, the Rome Declaration and the Greentree report include:

- the rising frequency of "joint evaluations" in which consortia of external supporting agencies including bilateral, multilaterals and international financial institutions collaborate with governments to examine programming in a sector or sub-sector over a full programme cycle;
- the trend to evaluation of projects and programmes directly in light of their contribution to the MDGs as expressed in the national PRSP;
- efforts to ensure that the term "country-led" evaluation becomes more of a reality, often in the context of a joint sector, sub-sector or thematic study but with the partner government playing a much more active role in the governance and management of the evaluation;
- the continuing challenge of how to evaluate large-scale, multi-agency funded programmes in which much support is provided through basket funding or even direct budgetary support. Even where UNICEF provides parallel direct support to this kind of programming, it is increasingly drawn into collective efforts to evaluate PBAs which go well beyond the boundaries of the UN system.

It seems relevant to ask whether a well developed UNICEF Country Programme Evaluation approach would make UNICEF better equipped to take part in and contribute to the four types of evaluation listed above. It is an important question given that these types of evaluation continue to increase in frequency in an effort to save the transaction costs associated with multiple agency led evaluations and to increase the relevance of evaluation results.

On one hand, these types of evaluations would seem to argue against a CPE approach in that they are not likely to cross the full spectrum of UNICEF activities in a give country and will probably focus on issues at the sector, sub-sector or thematic level. In that sense they would be narrower in their issues focus than a full UNICEF CPE. On the other hand, for UNICEF to engage constructively in these types of evaluations it will have to commit high quality professional resources which are not just sectoral in focus but which includes evaluation expertise — a level of expertise which is unlikely to develop under the current regime of project and activity level evaluation.

It also seems clear that the CPE process need not be so rigid that it cannot be adjusted to take account of special opportunities to take a thematic or sectoral focus and thereby to contribute to and take advantage of opportunities for joint, country-led evaluations. If, for example, country X were entering the process of planning a CPE at a time of considerable interest in HIV/AIDS programming and outcome in the country — that could be made the central focus of the CPE which could contribute to and benefit hugely from a multi-agency, government led evaluation.

This type of focussed, thematic CPE linked to a joint evaluation would have at least two major advantages over a simple but comprehensive UNICEF/partner country CPE:

- It would benefit from the professional guidance and evaluation expertise of the full range of donors, other external organizations, government agencies and national and international NGOs which might be involved. UNICEF country office evaluators could work with local counterparts as well as international evaluators and researchers with attendant benefits for quality assurance (and for capacity building);

- Joint, country led and sector or thematically focussed evaluations have an important advantage in that they can examine the inter-play and relative contribution of a wide range of actors. Thus their results are usually highly relevant not only to the technical content of development cooperation but to issues of harmonization, coherence and coordination bound up in institutional practices and inter-relationships. These issues have become central concerns in efforts to reform and improve development cooperation at a global level.

In summary, a well established practice of CPE at UNICEF should improve the agencies capacities and abilities to contribute to joint evaluations at country level. However, in order to access the potential improvements in both the quality and relevance of UNICEF evaluation activity which might result from participating in these studies, the CPE planning and implementation process would need to be flexible enough to allow for thematic and/or sectoral concentration and focus where opportunities arise.

7.   CPE — an effective UNICEF strategy in an era of change

This paper has argued that UNICEF faces a complex set of challenges arising from significant changes in the nature of development cooperation theory and practice in the past decade or so. These changes arise from a shared understanding of the need to ensure that the development process is "owned" to a much greater extent by countries and people who are the focus of development efforts combined with a recognized need to ensure development support and national policies are more coordinated and effective. At the same time, there has been a strong shift to place individuals and communities and their human rights and responsibilities at the centre of the development process.

UNICEF has been responding to these changes as a leading advocate of the Human Rights Based Approach to Programming and through its engagement in the CCA/UNDAF framework and process (among other initiatives). It has also been working to implement improvements in the quality and relevance of evaluations at the Country Office Level. All of these trends suggest that evaluation should be evolving at UNICEF in the same way the approaches to programming are evolving.

If Country Programme Evaluation as a practice is to represent an effective strategy for addressing an era of change at UNICEF it will need to prove itself useful in the following ways:

- As an effective means of evaluating and supporting Human Rights Based Approaches to Programming
- As an effective contributor to the UNICEF Country Programme Planning Process;
- As a means of improving the quality, rigour, relevance and utility of evaluation at UNICEF; and,
- As a means of strengthening UNICEF's capacity to take part in emerging, collaborative approaches to programming and to evaluation.

It seems clear, based on the analysis presented in the paper that Country Programme Evaluation can make a contribution in each of these areas. For example:

- In evaluating Country Programmes from the perspective of **HRBAP**, CPE provides a national scope and a broader focus than individual project and programme evaluations. It would allow UNICEF and its partners to assess the overall Country Programme strategy for mainstreaming HRBAP. It would also encourage and enable UNICEF and its partners to evaluate initiatives which are national in their reach, including efforts to improve the legislative basis for human rights programming, support national capacities, and develop a national consensus around policies and programmes for human rights. It is difficult to see how any of these evaluation goals could be achieved by continuing to invest in a large number of project and sub-programme evaluations which are more suited to addressing efforts to implement HRBAP at a community level.

- CPE can make a strong contribution to the **Country Programme Planning** process as a specific type or methodology of Mid Term Review to be applied in specific circumstances (see section 5.1 above). This indicates that there is a need to considerably re-orient the Country Programme from its current direction or to develop a very different programme approach for the new Country Programme. In these circumstances the broader scope, strategic focus, and more intensive and in-depth evaluative methods and resources implied in a CPE can provide a stronger analytical basis, ensure higher quality, and develop a more robust consensus for change than the standard Mid-Term Review process.

- CPE can make a strategic contribution by improving the alignment of Country Programme of Cooperation activities and resources to national policies and strategies, especially the MDG goals and the PRSP. Similarly, CPE can make more explicit and better articulate many important linkages in the CPC, including: links from projects to advocacy and communications, links from partnership as expressed in joint programming to the leveraging of public and external support to progress on children's rights, and links from UNICEF and external agency support to national expenditures in areas critical to children's rights.

- Country Programme Evaluation can also make an important contribution to improving the **general quality and relevance of evaluations** undertaken at Country Office level by UNICEF. In the first instance CPE will allow M & E staff at Country Office, Regional and Headquarters level to provide a higher level of technical support and quality assurance than they are able to do for the hundreds of project evaluations undertaken each year. It can result in fewer, higher quality and higher yield evaluations. At the same time, CPE will naturally involve UNICEF and its national partner in dialogue with other agencies and partners on norms and standards in programme evaluation. UNICEF's own research has shown that joint evaluations involving more than one external support agency tend to be higher in quality than project evaluations carried out by UNICEF alone. CPE will be more open to consultation and interaction with other national and international partners and will benefit from a shared improvement in evaluation quality.

- Finally, Country Programme Evaluation is well suited to providing UNICEF with the technical expertise, credibility at country level, and the flexibility to take part in increasingly frequent **joint evaluations** at country level which have a sectoral or thematic process and which encompass all the internal and external actors in the sector under the leadership (hopefully increasingly over time) of the partner country. This can only be done if the CPE is implemented in a flexible way but without CPE as a fairly established practice it seems unlikely that UNICEF could marshal the required level of sectoral and evaluation expertise and engagement at country level.

In summary, Country Programme Evaluation would be a credible strategic evaluation response to the key strands of change that UNICEF is sometimes leading and sometimes reacting to. It is not a panacea, or not the whole answer in terms of evaluation strategy. A well developed system and practice of CPE would, however, leave UNICEF much more able to take a full part in the collaborative efforts at evaluation (and programming) which are a more and more basic feature of development cooperation in this current era of change. It would also assist UNICEF in making a more credible effort to assess the results of HRBAP at a national as well as a community level.

ANNEX 1: BIBLIOGRAPHY

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