

Chapter 5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

1. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are integral and individually distinct parts of programme preparation and implementation. They are critical tools for forward-looking strategic positioning, organisational learning and for sound management.

2. This chapter provides an overview of key concepts, and details the monitoring and evaluation responsibilities of Country Offices, Regional Offices and others. While this and preceding chapters focus on basic description of monitoring and evaluation activities that CO are expected to undertake, more detailed explanation on practical aspects of managing monitoring and evaluation activities can be found in the UNICEF Monitoring and Evaluation Training Resource as well as in the series Evaluation Technical Notes.

Section 1. Key Conceptual Issues

3. As a basis for understanding monitoring and evaluation responsibilities in programming, this section provides an overview of general concepts, clarifies definitions and explains UNICEF's position on the current evolution of concepts, as necessary.

Situating monitoring and evaluation as oversight mechanisms

4. Both monitoring and evaluation are meant to *influence decision-making*, including decisions to improve, reorient or discontinue the evaluated intervention or policy; decisions about wider organisational strategies or management structures; and decisions by national and international policy makers and funding agencies.

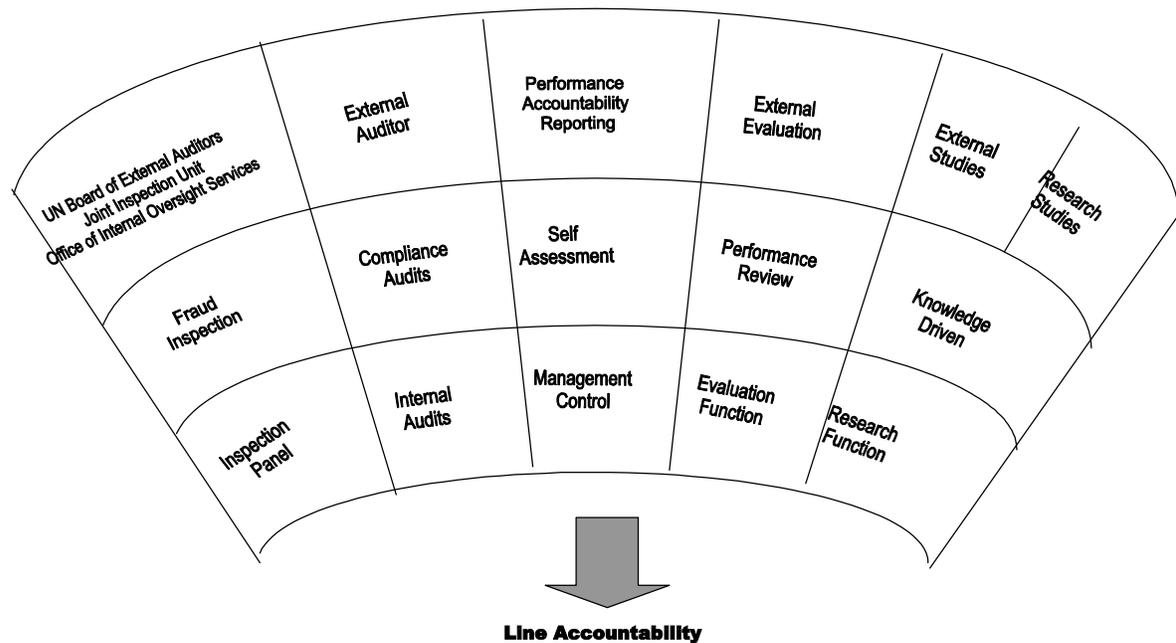
5. Inspection, audit, monitoring, evaluation and research functions are understood as different oversight activities situated along a scale (see Figure 5.1). At one extreme, inspection can best be understood as a control function. At the other extreme, research is meant to generate knowledge. Country Programme performance monitoring and evaluation are situated in the middle. While all activities represented in Diagram 5.1 are clearly inter-related, it is also important to see the distinctions.

Monitoring

6. There are two kinds of Monitoring:

- **Situation monitoring** measures change in a condition or a set of conditions or lack of change. Monitoring the situation of children and women is necessary when trying to draw conclusions about the impact of programmes or policies. It also includes monitoring of the wider context, such as early warning monitoring, or monitoring of socio-economic trends and the country's wider policy, economic or institutional context.

Figure 5.1 Oversight activities



- **Performance monitoring** measures progress in achieving specific objectives and results in relation to an implementation plan whether for programmes, projects, strategies, and activities.

Evaluation

7. Evaluation attempts to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the worth or significance of an intervention, strategy or policy. The appraisal of worth or significance is guided by key criteria discussed below. Evaluation findings should be credible, and be able to influence decision-making by programme partners on the basis of lessons learned. For the evaluation process to be 'objective', it needs to achieve a balanced analysis, recognise bias and reconcile perspectives of different stakeholders (including intended beneficiaries) through the use of different sources and methods.

8. An evaluation report should include the following:

- Findings and evidence – factual statements that include description and measurement;
- Conclusions – corresponding to the synthesis and analysis of findings;
- Recommendations – what should be done, in the future and in a specific situation; and, *where possible*,
- Lessons learned – corresponding to conclusions that can be generalised beyond the specific case, including lessons that are of broad relevance within the country, regionally, or globally to UNICEF or the international community. Lessons can include generalised conclusions about causal relations (what happens) and generalised normative conclusions (how an intervention should be carried out). Lessons can also be generated through other, less formal evaluative activities.

9. It is important to note that many reviews are in effect evaluations, providing an assessment of worth or significance, using evaluation criteria and yielding recommendations and lessons. An example of this is the UNICEF Mid-Term Review.

Audits

10. Audits generally assess the soundness, adequacy and application of systems, procedures and related internal controls. Audits encompass compliance of resource transactions, analysis of the operational efficiency and economy with which resources are used and the analysis of the management of programmes and programme activities. (ref. E/ICEF/2001/AB/L.7)

11. At country level, Programme Audits may identify the major internal and external risks to the achievement of the programme objectives, and weigh the effectiveness of the actions taken by the UNICEF Representative and CMT to manage those risks and maximise programme achievements. Thus they may overlap somewhat with evaluation. However they do not generally examine the relevance or impact of a programme. A Programme Management Audit Self-Assessment Tool is contained in Chapter 6.

Research and studies

12. There is no clear separating line between research, studies and evaluations. All must meet quality standards. Choices of scope, model, methods, process and degree of precision must be consistent with the questions that the evaluation, study or research is intending to answer.

13. In the simplest terms, an evaluation focuses on a particular intervention or set of interventions, and culminates in an analysis and recommendations specific to the evaluated intervention(s). Research and studies tend to address a broader range of questions – sometimes dealing with conditions or causal factors outside of the assisted programme – but should still serve as a reference for programme design. A Situation Analysis or CCA thus fall within the broader category of "research and study".

14. "Operational" or "action-oriented" research helps to provide background information, or to test parts of the programme design. It often takes the form of intervention trials (e.g. *Approaches to Caring for Children Orphaned by AIDS and other Vulnerable Children – Comparing six Models of Orphans Care, South Africa 2001*). While not a substitute for evaluation, such research can be useful for improving programme design and implementing modalities.

Evaluation criteria

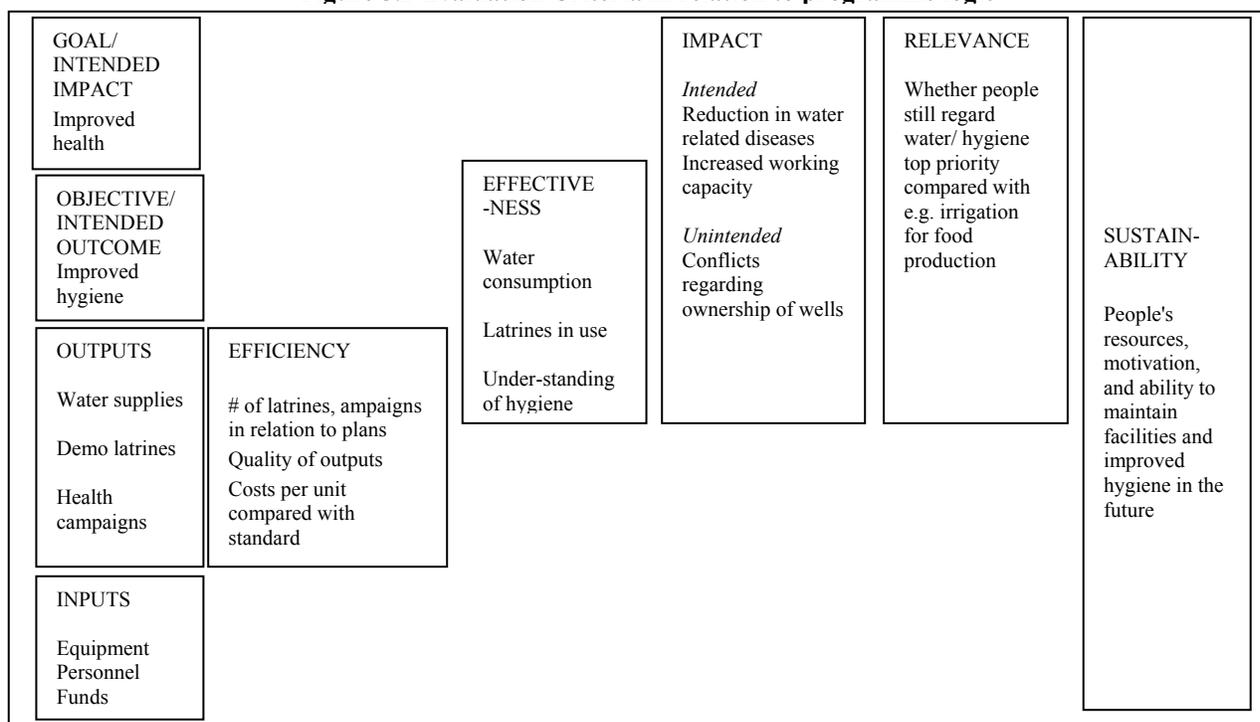
15. A set of widely shared evaluation criteria should guide the appraisal of any intervention or policy (see Figure 5.2). These are:

- Relevance – What is the value of the intervention in relation to other primary stakeholders' needs, national priorities, national and international partners' policies (including the Millennium Development Goals, National Development Plans, PRSPs and SWAPs), and global references such as human rights, humanitarian law and humanitarian principles, the

CRC and CEDAW? For UNICEF, what is the relevance in relation to the Mission Statement, the MTSP and the Human Rights based Approach to Programming? These global standards serve as a reference in evaluating both the processes through which results are achieved and the results themselves, be they intended or unintended.

- Efficiency – Does the programme use the resources in the most economical manner to achieve its objectives?
- Effectiveness – Is the activity achieving satisfactory results in relation to stated objectives?
- Impact – What are the results of the intervention - intended and unintended, positive and negative - including the social, economic, environmental effects on individuals, communities and institutions?
- Sustainability – Are the activities and their impact likely to continue when external support is withdrawn, and will it be more widely replicated or adapted?

Figure 5.2 Evaluation Criteria in relation to programme logic



16. the evaluation of humanitarian action must be guided by additional criteria as outlined in OECD-DAC guidance:

- Coverage - Which groups have been reached by a programme and what is the different impact on those groups?
- Coordination - What are the effects of co-ordination / lack of co-ordination on humanitarian action?
- Coherence - Is there coherence across policies guiding the different actors in security, developmental, trade, military and humanitarian spheres? Are humanitarian considerations taken explicitly into account by these policies?
- Protection - Is the response adequate in terms of protection of different groups?

More detail on these evaluation criteria is provided in the Evaluation Technical Notes.

Purpose of monitoring and evaluation

Learning and accountability

17. Learning and accountability are two primary purposes of monitoring and evaluation. The two purposes are often posed in opposition. Participation and dialogue are required for wider learning, while independent external evaluation is often considered a prerequisite for accountability. On the two extremes, their design – models, process, methods, and types of information – may indeed differ. However, as seen above in Figure 5.1, evaluation sits between these extremes. The current focus on wider participation by internal and external stakeholders and on impartiality allows learning and accountability purposes to be balanced..

18. *Performance monitoring* contributes to learning more locally, ideally at the level at which data are collected and at levels of programme management. It feeds into short-term adjustments to programmes, primarily in relation to implementation modalities. *Evaluation and monitoring of the situation of children and women* contribute to wider knowledge acquisition within the country or the organisational context. Programme evaluation not only contributes to improvements in implementation methods, but also to significant changes in programme design.

19. Evaluation contributes to learning through both the process and the final product or evaluation report. Increasingly, evaluation processes are used that foster wider participation, allow dialogue, build consensus, and create “buy-in” on recommendations.

20. Monitoring and evaluation also both serve *accountability purposes*. Performance monitoring helps to establish whether accountabilities are met for implementing of a plan. Evaluation helps to assess whether accountabilities are met for expected programme results. Global monitoring of the situation of children and women assists in assessing whether national and international actors are fulfilling their commitments in ensuring the realisation of human rights.

Advocacy

21. Monitoring and evaluation in UNICEF assisted programmes provide the basis for broader *advocacy* to strengthen global and national policies and programmes for children’s and women’s rights, through providing impartial and credible evidence. Evaluations of successful pilot projects provide the necessary rigour to advocate for scaling-up. Monitoring, particularly situation monitoring, draws attention to emerging children’s and women’s rights issues.

Early Warning Monitoring Systems

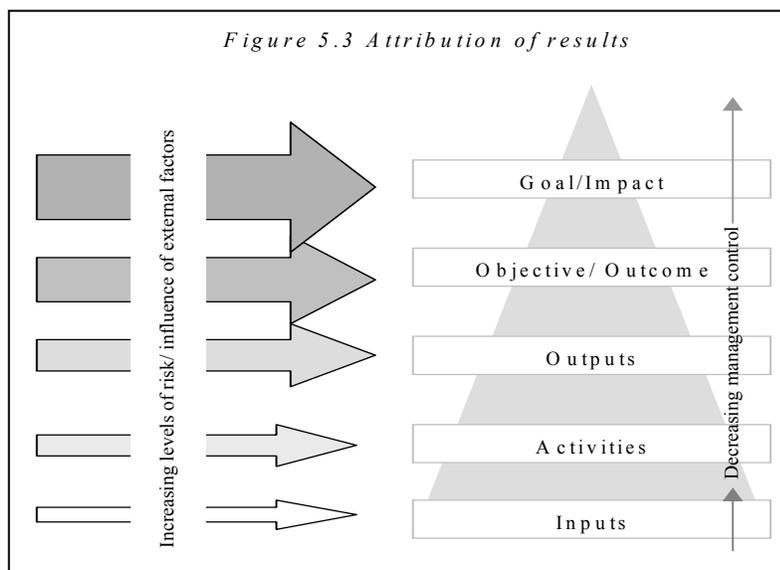
22. Country Offices should, within the UNCT, assist national governments to establish and operate a basic Early Warning System (EWS) and to strengthen the focus of existing systems on children and women. Early warning indicators help to monitor the likelihood of the occurrence of hazards, which have been identified during the preparation of the emergency profile (see

Chapter 6, Section 8). The most advanced EWS are presently related to household food security, environmental patterns affecting food production and imminent food crises. These include, for example, the USAID-supported Famine Early Warning System (FEWS), the World Food Programme's Vulnerability Assessment and Mapping System (VAM) and its corresponding Risk Mapping Project (RMP), and the FAO-supported Global Information and Early Warning Systems on Food and Agriculture (GIEWS). One of the key criteria for Early Warning indicators is sensitivity, i.e. that indicators reflect change in the situation promptly. Many such indicators draw on qualitative assessments and non-standardised information systems. Given the different expertise of development partners with such systems, national and sub-national Early Warning Systems should be supported jointly by the UN Country Team, where required.

Attribution and partnership

23. As defined by OECD-DAC, attribution represents "the extent to which observed development effects can be attributed to a specific intervention or to the performance of one or more partners taking account of other interventions, (anticipated or unanticipated) confounding factors, or external shocks." For UNICEF, the challenge is to draw conclusions on the cause-and-effect relationship between programmes/projects and the evolving situation of children and women. It may be difficult to attribute intermediate and long-term results to any single intervention or actor. Evaluations and reporting on results should therefore focus on *plausible attribution or credible association*.

24. Difficulties in attribution to any one actor increase as programmes succeed in building national capacity building and sector-wide partnerships. In such cases, it may be sensible to undertake joint evaluations, which may plausibly attribute wider development results to the joint efforts of all participating actors. Multi-agency evaluations of effectiveness of SWAPs, CAPs, or the UNDAF Evaluation are possible examples.



Section 2. Situating Evaluative Activities in the Programme Process

25. There are three groups of evaluation activities, related to different levels of programme management. Each group of activities should guide managers at the corresponding level.

Table 5. 1 –Monitoring and Evaluating at Different Intervention Levels

<i>Focus</i>	<i>Monitoring activities/systems</i>	<i>Evaluation activities</i>
Global Policy, Global Strategy, Regional Priorities	MTSP Monitoring Children’s Goals Monitoring Child Info Regional Quality Assurance Systems	Global, Regional Thematic Evaluations Global, Regional Syntheses of Evaluations Meta-Evaluations Regional Analysis Reports Multi-Country Evaluations
Country Programme	Situation Assessment and Analysis Common Country Assessment Early Warning Monitoring Annual Reviews Annual Management Reviews Mid-Term Management Review CO Quality Assurance Indicators	Evaluation of Country Programme Mid-Term Review Self-Assessment
Programme/ Project	Mid-year progress reviews Field visits Annual Management Review	Programme/project evaluation

26. When evaluative activities focus on Country Programme strategies and the corresponding choice of interventions, it is important to distinguish between “catalytic” and “operational” programme interventions as highlighted in the MTSP.

27. Different evaluative activities should be situated in relation to CO accountabilities as outlined in Chapter 2 (see Figure 2.3). COs and national partners are jointly responsible for monitoring the country context including early warning monitoring, monitoring the situation of women and children, and monitoring and evaluating the Country Programme. In addition, the CO has direct responsibility for monitoring its own performance. This is generally done through monitoring the quality of programme management, through field visits, Annual and Mid-Term Management Reviews and self-assessment exercises.

Section 3. Monitoring and Evaluation Responsibilities in UNICEF

28. Monitoring and evaluation activities have been described in Chapters 3 and 4, as they relate to the Country Programme planning and implementation. These included the SITAN, the IMEP, the [MTRs or Country Programme Evaluation](#), and the [Thematic Evaluation](#) all at Country Programme level; and programme evaluations and field visits at programme/project level. This section describes responsibilities for the planning and management of these monitoring and evaluation activities. Also see [E/ICEF/2002/10](#) on the Evaluation Function in the Context of the Medium-Term Strategic Plan.

Integrated Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Plan (IMEP)

29. The IMEP is the central tool that helps Government and UNICEF Country Offices to jointly manage their M&E responsibilities, as established in the BCA and MPO. The IMEP helps to use data strategically during programme implementation. In a summary version, it forms a part of the MPO (see Table 3.2.) The five-year IMEP helps to

- formulate evaluation topics directly related to achievement of strategic results
- determine activities to establish baselines and track progress, and when to conduct them
- identify research activities for addressing critical knowledge gaps, including those identified during the preparation of the causality analysis
- manage monitoring and evaluation workload
- synchronize data collection and dissemination with decision-making opportunities
- identify needs and activities to strengthen partners' capacities in data collection, management and analysis.

30. Preparation of the IMEP is part of the programme preparation process, and is linked to the Results Framework and the programme and project Logframes. The IMEP also facilitates measurement of Country Office performance and regional oversight. The involvement of senior Government and UNICEF management in the development and implementation of the IMEP is therefore central. The IMEP is reviewed, and amended during the Annual Reviews.

31. A Country Office can normally implement not more than one or two major evaluations studies, or research activities per year.

32. The updated annual portion of the IMEP forms part of the Annual Management Plan. For the annual IMEP, each programme manager should identify the activities of the five-years IMEP she/he is responsible for implementing during the year, and together with the M&E focal point identify the key implementation steps and dates. The steps may include finalizing the TOR, selecting the evaluation teams, inception report or methodology review, data collection, data analysis, dissemination workshop, publication, etc. All evaluations, research, studies or data collection exercises should also be planned for in the annual Programme Plan of Action (PPA).

33. More details on the IMEP process and format are described in [Chapter 3](#), [Chapter 6 - Section 6](#), and the Evaluation Technical Notes.

Quality standards

34. The Representative is responsible for the quality of evaluations. Where necessary, technical support from the regional level, UNICEF HQ, or external sources may be sought.

35. UNICEF promotes a utilisation-focused approach to evaluation. When designing, managing or participating in evaluative activities, the CO should consider how each aspect - focus, content, model, process, methods - will affect use by the intended audience. Consistent with this, the CO and RO have important responsibilities in respect to dissemination, which are discussed below.

36. Offices should make reference to the [Evaluation Standards](#) increasingly adopted by national and regional professional evaluation associations. These include utility standards, feasibility standards, propriety standards and accuracy standards. The standards can be used as a guide for designing and managing the evaluation process, and for assessing the quality of an existing evaluation.

37. In applying the above standards, a human-right based approach to programming requires UNICEF to ensure the wide participation of stakeholders and especially beneficiaries wherever possible. At the same time this must be coupled with attention to mechanisms to ensure the protection of human subjects of monitoring and evaluation activities. There are special implications in this regard for the protection of children participating in monitoring and evaluation. COs are expected to use the [Evaluation Technical Notes, No. 1](#) as a guide in this matter.

38. Finally, all evaluation reports *must* include a summary of purpose/objectives, methodology, findings/conclusions, recommendations and, if applicable, broader lessons learned. While findings and conclusions are often presented together, it is important to present separately the recommendations and any lessons learned. These specifications should be included in the Terms of Reference for evaluations and should be a condition of the contract with external evaluators.

Management of monitoring and evaluation resources

39. The Representative should ensure, and Regional Directors should verify that adequate resources are dedicated to monitoring and evaluation activities. The Executive Board recommends that 2 per cent to 5 per cent of country programme expenditure should normally be devoted to evaluative activities each year, in addition to any support budget covering core staff time contribution to such work (ref: CF/PD/PRO/1986-001). Monitoring activities of COs have increased, in particular with support to monitoring the situation of women and children through Multi-Indicator Cluster Surveys, assistance to national partners in reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and attention to early warning systems development. In support of results based management, the Evaluation Office recommends that the 2 to 5 per cent be spent specifically on performance monitoring and evaluation. Activities covered by this may include: Annual Reviews, the Mid-Term Review, programme/project evaluations, research and studies, and surveys or other data collection for performance monitoring. In addition, further resource allocations should be made to support monitoring of the situation of women and children, including through Situation Analysis, as a strategic contribution to national knowledge.

Disclosure

40. Consistent with disclosure provisions established with national partners in the BCA progress reports and the findings of evaluations of UNICEF assisted programmes are considered public. Therefore, the Mid-Term Review report or CP evaluation, the Annual Review report, programme and project evaluations, thematic evaluations, and are public documents. Evaluative reports which are internal to UNICEF are: the CO Annual Report, the Regional Analysis Report, and reports resulting from the Mid-Term Management Review and the Annual Management Review.

Management of effective learning

41. The Representative is responsible for ensuring that evaluation activities contribute to effective learning, for the CO itself, for programme partners and in conjunction with the Regional and HQ levels, for UNICEF globally. An important aspect in this is the management of the evaluation process, for which existing Evaluation Standards are an important guide.

42. The Country Office is primarily responsible for disseminating evaluation reports, and especially findings, recommendations and lessons to programme partners, representatives of primary stakeholders involved in the evaluation, participating agencies, donors, and within UNICEF. The Regional Office is similarly responsible for promoting and disseminating multi-country evaluations, studies and research, and for reporting in summary and comparative form on major country evaluations to the UNICEF Executive Board. Findings can be disseminated through various mechanisms, including formal presentations with national stakeholders, local level community meetings, regional knowledge networks, the CO Annual Report and the Regional Analysis Report.

42. All completed evaluations and studies must be submitted in electronic version to the Regional Director and the Director of the Evaluation Office. The Evaluation Offices maintains a website on the Intranet containing summaries of purpose/objectives, methodology, findings/conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned of all evaluations and studies that are considered of good quality and significance. In addition, the Evaluation Office maintains a repository of all evaluations and studies commissioned by COs, ROs or Headquarters regardless of quality, for accountability purposes.

43. The Representative is also responsible for follow-up to evaluation recommendations, and for seeing that lessons feed systematically into planning processes. Lessons must be systematically analysed in the Annual Reviews and the Mid-Term Reviews. A distillation of lessons learned must be summarized in and feed into the formulation of the Strategy Paper and the CPD, the MPO, and the annual PPAs.

44. Finally, COs, with regional level assistance where necessary, are responsible for contributing to strengthening national monitoring and evaluation capacities. National monitoring and data collection systems are key elements of national capacity to promote and protect children's rights.

Roles and Responsibilities of Regional Offices in Managing Monitoring and Evaluation

45. The Regional Office has the following oversight and support responsibilities (also see E/ICEF/2002/10):

- i Review of IMEPs, and monitoring compliance with evaluation standards;
- ii Review Country Office performance in IMEP implementation;
- iii Ensure quality of major evaluations;
- iv Provide technical support to CO level evaluations as required;
- v Establish and promote strategic evaluation and research themes and priorities for the region, within the context of the MTSP and in consultation with the RMT;
- vi Support the strengthening of skills and capacities for monitoring, survey, and evaluation among UNICEF staff and partners;
- vii Facilitate inter-country exchange of lessons learned; report in summary and comparative form to the Executive Director and Executive Board on major evaluation activities in the region.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Evaluation Office at HQ

46. The Evaluation Office has the following accountabilities:

- i to conduct evaluations, with particular relevance for organisational processes and global policy;
- ii to seek to reinforce the organization's capacity to address evaluation needs, with an emphasis on the requirements of country offices and capacity-building in countries
- iii to provide technical guidance for a comprehensive system of performance management and leadership in the development of policy, strategic, programme and project evaluations
- iv to monitor and review the quality of UNICEF-sponsored evaluations
- v to maintain a database of evaluations and research studies, to ensure access by Regional and Country Offices and to promote their dissemination and utilization
- vi to collaborate with other United Nations agencies on the harmonization of evaluation activities and guidelines
- vii to coordinate at the global level with donors, major non-governmental organizations and other partners on the evaluation of programmes funded by donors or executed jointly with other organizations.

PQAA Checklist – Monitoring and Evaluation

- Has the CO completed a new or updated the existing Situation Assessment and Analysis of children's and women's rights since the start of the programme cycle, or will it be completed before the end of the current cycle?
- Have the RO and RMT established strategic evaluation and research themes within the context of the MTSP?
- Has an IMEP been prepared as part of the MPO, and is it being updated annually? Has the RO reviewed and commented on the IMEP?
- Does the RO review country office performance in implementing IMEPs?
- Have at least two major, externally facilitated programme/project evaluation been completed, or are scheduled to be completed before the end of the programme cycle?
- Do all major evaluations involve key stakeholders in design and analysis, and rely on triangulation of data sources and findings?
- Do all major evaluations involve beneficiary consultation, or other forms of active participation, wherever possible? Are mechanisms in place to ensure the protection of those participating in evaluation?
- Is there a mechanism for quality control on the design of major evaluations within the Country Office?
- Has the RO reviewed the design of major evaluations, and offered technical assistance as required?
- Is the MTR supported by formal evaluations?
- Has two to five percent of country programme expenditure been spent on performance monitoring and evaluation?
- Does the office have a mechanism for reviewing, taking action and follow-up on the findings and recommendations of evaluations?
- Are field visits routinely scheduled and undertaken with programme partners?
- Does the CMT monitor an agreed set of indicators to measure the quality of programme and operations management?
- Does the RO actively support the strengthening of monitoring, survey and research skills among national partners and UNICEF staff in the region?

References and Recommended Reading – Monitoring and Evaluation

- E/ICEF/2001/AB/L.7 Internal Audit Activities In 2000
- E/ICEF/2002/10, Report On The Evaluation Function In The Context Of The MTSP
- CF/EXD/1997-01 Information Sharing on Evaluations and Studies
- CF/PD/PRO/ 1998-07, Guidelines for Annual Reviews and Mid-Term Reviews
- CF/PD/PRO/1986-001 Framework for Improving the Monitoring and Evaluation of Child Survival and Development Activities
- Evaluation Technical Notes
- Monitoring and Evaluation Training Resource
- OECD-DAC guidance

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UNICEF, *Programme Policy and Procedures Manual: Programme Operations*, UNICEF, New York, Revised May 2003, pp. 81-83.

Excerpt from Chapter 4, Section 1

Mid-Term Review (MTR) and Country Programme Evaluations (CPE)

39. The Mid-Term Review is held approximately halfway through the CP cycle, usually towards the end of the second half of the mid-year of the CP (ref. PRO/1998-07). In the year of an MTR, the Annual Review may form part of the wider MTR process. The principal purposes of the MTR are to:

- examine how the experiences 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 design of the CP as established in the MPO;
- assess whether modification in the CP objectives, strategies and content, the distribution of funds between programmes, the MPO, or the CPMP are warranted as a result of:
 - changes in the country's environment and the situation of children and women;
 - new insights and experience obtained during the first half of the programme cycle;
 - changes in the programme environment (e.g. expected partner contributions not coming forward, or new emerging partnerships)
 - changes in national or UNICEF policies and priorities as expressed, for instance, in the MTSP and the WFFC Plan of Action;
- 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.

40. The MTR is typically the most substantial of all review exercises in a Country Programme and should be as structured, rigorous and focused as any evaluation. The design of the MTR depends on the specific purpose and scope of the issues to be reviewed, and should aim for cost-effectiveness and high quality of findings and analysis. The MTR focuses on questions and issues shaping the overall direction and fundamental strategic choices of the CP. The following should be considered:

- Preparation of the MTR should be foreseen and incorporated in the PPAs and IMEP;
- The specific purpose, evaluation objectives and questions of the MTR must be clearly defined and agreed among partners;
- Stakeholder involvement is required, as in a major impartial evaluation;
- Systematic comparison of findings across different approaches, types or sources of information, methods of data collection and types of analysis;
- The MTR draws on monitoring reports, evaluative activities or other completed evaluations. At least some of these should provide beneficiary perspectives. Where no

existing evaluative work provides this perspective, new data collection should be contemplated;

- The review process and final report should clearly distinguish the following:
 - UNICEF performance, as distinct from the shared performance and achievements of the Country Programme partners;
 - Achievements in terms of the quality of both outcomes/impact and processes.

41. As one option, the methodology of the MTR can take the form of a *Country Programme Evaluation (CPE)*. 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 country report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The CPE will give attention to questions of relevance:

- at the broadest level, is the CP focussing on the right issues?;
- specifically, are the key issues for children's and women's rights identified in the SITAN, CCA and CPD still relevant?;
- is the positioning of UNICEF appropriate vis-à-vis other partners to address these issues?;
- is the balance between catalytic and operational interventions appropriate?
- In terms of effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, can successes of the CP be taken to scale?
- What can be learned from both successes and failures?

A CPE can look at these issues over the period of one or more than one programme cycle.

42. A CPE can be proposed as a methodology for the MTR by the CO, the RO, RMT or Headquarters. It should involve the RO, RMT and/or Headquarters in design and management through some form of steering group. Examples and draft guidance can be obtained from the Evaluation Office.

43. About six months before the final MTR meeting takes place, the government ministry responsible for cooperation with UNICEF and the UNICEF Representative draw up a work plan for the MTR. This should be shared with the RO for comment before finalization. The work plan typically includes the day on which the MTR review meeting is scheduled to take place, the preparation meetings, schedule and focus of consultations, the programme, project, sub-national or thematic evaluations to be carried out, the dates for submission of the evaluation findings, the dates for the submission and review of programme task force reports, and the date for the preparation of the final draft report for the MTR meeting. A good work plan is the equivalent of a Terms of Reference for those involved in the process.

44. Over the preparatory period in-depth analyses of each of the programme components that make up the CP are carried out. This process culminates in the final MTR meeting.

45. The review meeting lasts from half a day to two days. It reviews the progress of the CP in relation to the original expected results, the resources mobilized and used (compared to those

planned), the main results for children and women achieved to date, constraints encountered, the findings of evaluations, and recommendations for corrective action.

46. Following the MTR meeting, two reports are prepared:

- a full report, prepared in cooperation with the government, using the outline set out in the MTR guidelines (ref. PRO/1998-07);
- an internal summary of the full report, of up to five pages, for the use by the Regional Director, including in his/her reporting to the Executive Board, and for posting on the UNICEF Intranet. It is also good practice for the CO and the RO to develop an agreed note for internal follow up actions after the MTR and the associated management review.

47. The MTR process and final meeting may take place as part of, in conjunction with, or as an input to a wider review with national partners of the UNDAF or international programmes of cooperation. In such cases, however, adequate provisions should still be made for analysis of the progress and design of UNICEF cooperation specifically, within the wider framework, in order to ensure accountability to the UNICEF Executive Board and funding partners and continuing effectiveness of the resources that UNICEF deploys.

48. Following the MTR, a mid-term management review should be carried out, which can in part replace the AMR of that year. The main aim of this review is to analyse the overall management performance of the CO during the first half of the programme cycle in comparison to the planned outcomes in the CPMP, and identify areas for improvement for the remaining part of the programme. In addition to the issues addressed in the AMR, set out above, the mid-term management review would also re-examine the staffing structure of the office and identify any necessary changes in the CPMP, to be proposed and presented to the next regional PBR. A short report of the review will be written and distributed among the office staff, the Regional Office and Headquarters. Both the review and report will provide inputs to the Country Office Annual Report, help update the CPMP if significant management or staffing changes are being proposed for submission to the PBR, and form the basis for the following year's AMP.

49. The MTR process, findings and conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned (for both the Programme Review and the Management Review) should also be referred to in detail in the Annual Report.

50. In the case of COs responding to the sudden on-set of a humanitarian crisis that results in a significant increase in Other Resources, and in the absence of an evaluation undertaken with other major humanitarian actors, it is recommended that the CO plan for a major review in the form of a CPE, to take place about 12 months after the on-set of the crisis. Given the dramatic change in country context, the likely change in the number of international and national actors and the pressures on the CO, an externally facilitated CPE will be necessary.

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UNICEF, *Programme Policy and Procedures Manual: Programme Operations*, UNICEF, New York, Revised May 2003, p. 84.

Excerpt from Chapter 4, Section 1

Thematic evaluations

53. The purpose of thematic evaluations is to draw lessons that can be generalized beyond the context of a single project or programme. The theme can be based on:

- a strategy – such as community participation, capacity building, advocacy;
- a priority issue – such as decentralization, civil society partnerships, gender mainstreaming or management issues;
- a programme objective or area (including areas related to the MTSP priorities).

54. Thematic evaluations are often useful at key review events such as the Mid-Term Review. As part of their evaluation responsibilities, Regional Offices (ROs) and Headquarters also carry out thematic evaluations focusing on strategic issues and feeding into regional and global policy development.

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Report on the evaluation function in the context of the medium-term strategic plan

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REPORT ON THE EVALUATION FUNCTION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGIC PLAN**

SUMMARY

The present report is submitted in accordance with Executive Board decision 2001/23 (E/ICEF/2001/6/Rev.1) on the programme of work for Board sessions in 2002, adopted at the second regular session in December 2001. The report presents a status report on the UNICEF evaluation function in the context of the medium-term strategic plan (MTSP) covering the years 2002-2005 (E/ICEF/2001/13 and Corr.1).

Following the introduction, chapter II provides the background to the report. An overview of the evaluation system in UNICEF and the accountability framework for evaluation are presented in chapter III. Recent measures taken to strengthen the evaluation function are described in chapter IV. The proposal for a multi-year evaluation plan in support of the MTSP is presented in chapter V. Chapter VI contains a draft recommendation for Executive Board approval.

* E/ICEF/2002/9.

** The need for extensive consultation within the secretariat delayed the submission of the present report.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its second regular session of 2001, in approving the programme of work for its sessions in 2002, the Executive Board requested the secretariat to prepare a report on the evaluation function in the context of the medium-term strategic plan (MTSP) for 2002-2005 (E/ICEF/2001/13 and Corr.1) for its 2002 annual session (E/ICEF/2001/6/Rev.1, decision 2001/23).

2. The Executive Board last considered a report on the evaluation function, entitled "Overall progress in the implementation of evaluation activities in UNICEF" (E/ICEF/1992/L.9), at its 1992 regular session (E/ICEF/1992/14, decision 1992/24). In response to Executive Board decision 1995/8 (E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1), the secretariat submits annually to the Board at its annual session a summary of the outcome of mid-term reviews (MTRs) and major evaluations of country programmes, specifying, inter alia, the results achieved, lessons learned and the need for any

adjustments in the country programmes. In addition, the Executive Director reports to the Executive Board on evaluation matters in part II of her annual report. In 1999, the Executive Board decided that starting from 2000, information in part II of the Executive Director's report should be presented in a way that facilitates monitoring of progress in achieving the objectives of the programmes and activities within the framework of the organizational priorities in the medium-term plan (MTP) for the period 1998-2001 (E/ICEF/1998/13 and Corr.1 and E/ICEF/1999/7/Rev.1, decision 1999/7).

II. OVERVIEW

A. Background

3. In decision 1992/24, the Executive Board reaffirmed its decision 1990/4 (E/ICEF/1990/13) that a past review of evaluations and their use, as well as a summary of the evaluation plan and structure, be included in all country programmes. In that same decision, the Executive Board also decided the following: that this evaluation plan include evaluations in all programme areas assisted; that in addition to being a project-focused effort, evaluation at the country programme level should increasingly address programme-level activities; that UNICEF should make available an enhanced evaluation database to monitor evaluation implementation and to facilitate the learning process; that the necessary financial and staff resources be available for implementing evaluation plans and for monitoring the use of results; that a three- or four-year rolling evaluation plan be established; that joint evaluations with donors be intensified; and that collaboration on evaluation be strengthened with Governments in order to address the capacity-building and institutional-strengthening requirements through the country programme and that priority in this regard be given to sub-Saharan Africa.

4. Pursuant to Executive Board decisions and recommendations from external auditors' reports and the multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF (E/ICEF/1993/CRP.7), the Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, announced the formation of the Evaluation and Research Office in his Executive Directive of June 1993 (CF/EXD/1993-006). That decision was taken to better reflect the commitment of UNICEF to strengthening national capacities for essential national research for children and women. It also reflected measures for strengthening the overall evaluation capacity of UNICEF and improvement of the function in support of programme planning.

5. The Executive Board, during its annual session of June 1998, approved the new organization of UNICEF (E/ICEF/Organization/Rev.3 of 24 April 1998) in the context of the implementation of management excellence as well as of the 1998-1999 biennial support budget. UNICEF headquarters was reorganized to focus on strategic, policy, advocacy and oversight functions. This was done taking into account that UNICEF had always been a decentralized, field-based organization and that headquarters structures worked together to best support and strengthen country programmes and the effective delivery of the UNICEF mission. The Evaluation, Policy and Planning (EPP) Division was created to provide technical leadership in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of organizational performance in monitoring the global situation of the child; to ensure that the results of evaluations were fed into the development of organizational policies and strategies; to analyse the impact of social and economic trends and policies on children; and to coordinate strategic planning and the development of MTPs for the organization. As a consequence of the reorganization, the Office of Evaluation and Research became a unit of EPP.

6. In December 2001, in the context of the approval of the MTSP (decision 2001/22) and the 2002-2003 biennial support budget (E/ICEF/2001/AB/L.10 and decision 2001/13), the Executive Board endorsed the reorganization of the headquarters Programme Group based on the results achieved and experience gained from the former structures. Responding to the need to use the evaluation function more strategically and to provide technical support to fortify performance assessment, the Evaluation Office was given the status of a separate office with increased resources, reporting to the Deputy Executive Director, Programme and Strategic Planning. This measure also enables UNICEF to be more in conformity with international professional standards regarding the positioning of the Evaluation Office within the organization.

B. Evaluation in the context of the medium-term strategic plan

7. The MTSP combines a reinforced results-based management approach and a human rights-based approach to programming. Building on the lessons learned from implementation of the MTP, the new plan establishes five organizational priorities, more clearly defines objectives and indicators, and strengthens the strategic use of the

evaluation function. For the first time, a plan has been proposed for the evaluation of the MTSP.

8. The MTSP indicates that evaluation will focus more on the country programme level and on institutional management of the organization as a whole. It will look at the rationale, effectiveness and administrative efficiency and economy of activities undertaken or supported by UNICEF. Evaluation will support accountability and results-oriented performance.

9. Country programme evaluations will gradually be strengthened. During the first two years of the MTSP, the Evaluation Office will develop basic principles and methodologies and conduct a limited number of field tests, taking into account previous work on the subject. From the third year of the MTSP, regional offices will gradually assume responsibilities in this regard.

10. A special effort has been made to formulate the MTSP so that organizational priorities express the strategic intents pursued from an institutional perspective and so that indicators serve as benchmarks for the assessment of organizational performance. At the end of the third year of the four-year period, a review of the implementation of the MTSP will assess progress made towards the organizational priorities. MTRs and major evaluations of country programmes will inform this review. Lessons learned from the review will be used for the development of the next MTSP.

11. The evaluation plan for the duration of the MTSP will cover key themes and topics of strategic significance. The organizational priorities of the MTSP will guide the selection of thematic evaluations to be undertaken at country, regional and global levels. Such evaluations will be conducted with an emphasis on programmes, strategies and policies. Topical evaluations will address a variety of cross-cutting themes as well as UNICEF organizational effectiveness. Implementation of the evaluation plan will, in some cases, involve partnerships with other United Nations agencies and/or governmental and non-governmental organizations. Findings will be stored in an on-line electronic database, and learning workshops will be part of the dissemination of evaluation results.

III. UNICEF EVALUATION SYSTEM

A. Evaluation within the performance monitoring and oversight framework of UNICEF

12. During the third regular session of 1997, the Executive Board endorsed the framework of roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for performance monitoring and oversight (E/ICEF/1997/AB/L.12 and E/ICEF/1997/12/Rev.1, decision 1997/28). Performance monitoring and oversight were major themes throughout the management excellence process in UNICEF. Their purpose is to ensure high quality and responsive programmes through the responsible use of resources for the maximum benefit of children and women.

13. Performance monitoring and oversight feature in all aspects of UNICEF work. The UNICEF system of oversight is a cyclical process involving assessment of programme and operational performance against organizational priorities and objectives generated by the planning process. The answer to the question "How are we performing against what we set out to achieve?" is obtained through "performance monitoring", a management function carried out in offices throughout UNICEF, and "oversight", separate independent mechanisms to assess programme and operational performance.

14. The fulfilment of accountabilities within UNICEF is assessed through a dual system of performance monitoring and oversight. Performance monitoring includes all tasks associated with supervision. It is a management function assigned at all levels of the organization. Oversight of these management functions is maintained through independent internal audit and investigative functions carried out within UNICEF, and by mandated external bodies within the United Nations system. Implementation of accepted recommendations from oversight activities is then, in turn, a responsibility of line management.

15. The evaluation function in UNICEF is both a mechanism for providing oversight at country, regional and headquarters locations and an instrument that allows organizational learning through the identification of lessons and good practices. Evaluations are conducted as a component of performance monitoring to assess whether UNICEF programmes achieve their objectives and are effective and relevant, and to distil lessons for improved programming, strategic planning and policy development. Evaluations are also commissioned by the Evaluation Office as a

component of the independent oversight activities of UNICEF.

16. The research function also contributes to organizational learning and knowledge acquisition. It enhances effectiveness during the design of approaches, policies, strategies and programmes. Research is concerned with testing and understanding basic models and approaches, and is based on scientific methodologies. In UNICEF, the Innocenti Research Centre, Programme Division, the Division of Policy and Planning and country offices conduct research studies and contribute to organizational learning.

17. Thus, the evaluation function is one of many functions within the performance monitoring and oversight system. Evaluation is not an inspection, nor is it an audit. It should not be confused with monitoring, which is a management function of self-assessment and reporting. Evaluation should not be expected to yield scientific findings such as those emanating from fundamental research.

B. Purpose of the evaluation function

18. In the Secretary-General's bulletin on the regulations governing the methods of evaluation (ST/SGB/2000/8) issued on 19 April 2000, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 54/236 of 23 December 1999 and its decision 54/74 of 7 April 2000, the objectives of evaluation are defined in regulation 7.1:

(a) To determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the Organization's activities in relation to their objectives;

(b) To enable the Secretariat and Member States to engage in systematic reflection, with a view to increasing the effectiveness of the main programmes of the Organization by altering their content and, if necessary, reviewing their objectives.

19. The report on the "Implementation of management excellence in UNICEF" stated that "the evaluation function in UNICEF is both a mechanism for providing oversight at country, regional and headquarters locations and an instrument that allows organizational learning through the identification of lessons and good practices" (E/ICEF/1997/AB/L.12, paragraph 4).

20. Hence, the evaluation function has many purposes. Evaluation is essentially about identifying and understanding results and their impacts, aiming at the provision of useful information and best alternatives to inform decision-making. Its intent is to enable learning-by-doing, thus improving results-oriented activities by re-engineering ongoing activities or improving the design of new ones. The formative evaluation process is participatory and is an empowerment tool fostering fairness and impartiality, enlarging the potential for consensus-building. Finally, evaluation is about accountability because it focuses on results achieved or not achieved and on explaining what has been achieved and why. It shows what decisions/actions were taken in light of what happened. Most of all, it enables the provision of information on results and learning to stakeholders and the public.

21. In summary, evaluation is the function that examines a policy, a strategy, a programme or an activity/project by asking the following questions: Are we doing the right thing? Are we doing it right? Are there better ways of doing it? It answers the first question by proceeding with a reality check, by examining the rationale or justification, and by assessing relevance in relationship to the fulfilment of rights. The second question is answered by examining effectiveness through the lenses of the pertinence of the results achieved and by assessing efficiency with the review of the optimization of the use of resources. The third question is dealt with by identifying and comparing alternatives, by seeking best practices and by providing relevant lessons learned.

22. Professional experience and learning point to the following six key characteristics for good evaluations:

(a) Impartiality: neutrality and transparency of the evaluation process, analysis and reporting;

(b) Credibility: professional expertise, methodological rigour, participation and transparency;

(c) Usefulness: timeliness for decision-making, and clear and concise presentation of relevant facts;

(d) Participation: reflection of different interests, needs and perceptions, and sharing among stakeholders;

(e) Feedback: systematic dissemination of findings to stakeholders and use in decision-making;

(f) Value-for-money: value-added outweighs the costs.

C. Findings from the peer review

23. In December 2000, a peer review was conducted of the evaluation function in UNICEF. The heads of evaluation of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Food Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Bank, as well of the Director of the Office of Internal Audit, proceeded with a comparative examination of the evaluation function. The review concluded with the following findings:

(a) There is a lack of a common set of norms and standards that govern evaluation functions within the United Nations system in spite of the General Assembly resolution requesting harmonization;

(b) The introduction of results-based methodologies has significant implications, and the traditional oversight approaches need to be reassessed;

(c) Country programme evaluations need to be recognized as a unit of evaluation;

(d) The issue of attribution needs to be revisited in the context of partnership approaches;

(e) The role and level of central evaluation offices respond to different organizational expectations within the United Nations system; some are independent, while others are twinned with audit or other oversight functions;

(f) Most evaluation units within the United Nations system are more centralized and many are oriented to policy-making, whereas evaluation in UNICEF has been oriented towards programme guidance.

24. The peer review also referred to the principles for evaluation of development assistance issued in 1991 (OECD/GD(91)208) and reassessed in 1998 by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (DAC/OECD). These principles reveal a strong consensus among the heads of evaluation of the bilateral agencies on the following principles:

(a) Agencies should have an evaluation policy with clearly established guidelines and methods, and with a clear definition of its role and responsibilities and its place in the organizational structure;

(b) The evaluation process should be impartial and independent from the process concerned with policy-making and the delivery and management of development assistance;

(c) The evaluation process must be as open as possible, with the results made widely available;

(d) For evaluations to be useful, they must be used; feedback to both policy makers and operational staff is essential;

(e) Partnership with recipients and donor cooperation in evaluation are both essential; they are an important aspect of in-country institutional-building and coordination, and may reduce administrative burdens on countries;

(f) Evaluation and its requirements must be an integral part of planning from the start; clear identification of the objectives that an activity is to achieve is an essential prerequisite for any evaluation.

D. Stratification of the evaluation system

25. In UNICEF, there are three levels where results are being achieved. They are: the local activity or project level; the country programme of cooperation level; and the organizational management level, including the organization's own organizational performance. These levels correspond well with the accountability framework reflected in the organization of UNICEF (E/ICEF/Organization/Rev.3). For each level, there is a management cycle consisting of the

five phases of planning, programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

26. At the activity/project level, a diagnosis of the need is made and an expected result answering to the identified need is articulated as the objective of the project/activity, together with performance indicators and risk assumptions. This is the planning phase that is completed in tandem with the programming phase. The latter consists of the preparation of an explicit work breakdown structure, a schedule of events, a budget and a matrix of accountability related to the undertaking of each task, as well as the overall management of the activity/project. Implementation is carried out by the programme partners, contractors, or directly by UNICEF staff. Monitoring ensures the measurement of progress and reports the gaps, enabling the orientation of activity/project implementation according to the plan or the realignment of the activity in order to maximize impact and optimize the use of resources. At this level, evaluation is used, in a participatory fashion, to examine results, the relevance of the activity/project design in light of the needs, the effectiveness and sustainability of the effects, the efficiency of management, and economy in the use of resources for the purpose of informing decision-making and learning.

27. The results management framework at the level of the country programme of cooperation also entails the same five management phases. During the planning phase, a situation analysis is conducted, the rights-based approach reveals the gaps and areas of priority, alternative interventions are considered, and a programme proposal is structured and submitted to the Executive Board for approval. During the programming phase, an integrated monitoring and evaluation plan (IMEP) is prepared. The IMEP process strengthens the rights-based and results-oriented focus of the master plan of operations. The IMEP makes explicit the objectives tree of the country programme; identifies the key performance indicators and risks; and provides a systematic approach to monitoring, evaluation and research in support of programme management. Implementation is monitored by means of annual country programme reports and periodic audits. The regional directors report annually to the Executive Board on MTRs and major evaluations of country programmes. Formal comprehensive evaluations of country programmes of cooperation now being piloted are expected to be conducted more systematically in the future.

28. At the level of the organizational management of UNICEF activities, the same five management phases are being put in place with more rigour. The MTSP is the business plan of the institutional priorities of UNICEF. It is based on a diagnosis emanating from the end-decade review and the global needs expressed by member countries in international forums that have led to the setting of global targets such as the Millennium Development Goals. The multi-year funding framework integrates the major areas of action, resources, budget and outcomes, in compliance with Executive Board decision 1999/8. Annual reports submitted by the Executive Director to the Executive Board provide progress reporting on implementation. The organizational performance of UNICEF is assessed by means of the mid-term review of the MTSP and implementation of the multi-year evaluation plan.

29. Thus, there is an evaluation function being performed at each of the three results management levels. The main purpose of the evaluation function is to inform decision-making and distil lessons learned to be used for future planning at each level of results management within the organization. It should be noted that different evaluation approaches and methodologies need to be applied in order to respond to the needs of each level of management. Moreover, for each level, the evaluation function addresses the needs of different networks of decision makers. At the activity/project level, the users of evaluation are the stakeholders, the project team and the country management team (CMT). At the level of the country programme of cooperation, those directly interested in evaluation of the country programme are the national authorities, the CMT, the regional office and headquarters. Organizational management-level evaluations are of interest to the Executive Board, senior management at headquarters and regional offices.

E. Accountability for the evaluation function

30. The decentralization of the evaluation function is a singular characteristic of the UNICEF evaluation system compared to other international organizations. The country office conducts most of the evaluation work. Regional offices provide oversight and support for evaluations undertaken by the country offices. Regional offices also conduct thematic evaluations related to their regional strategies. Headquarters divisions undertake evaluations relating to their areas of expertise. The Evaluation Office provides functional leadership and overall management of the evaluation system. It also conducts and commissions evaluations.

31. In each country office, an evaluation focal point is accountable to the country representative, who reports annually to the regional director on evaluation findings. Each regional office has a monitoring and evaluation officer who

coordinates evaluation work performed by the country offices and their own regional office. The regional director provides annually a report to the Executive Board on MTRs and major evaluations. From a headquarters perspective, the Executive Director reports on evaluation matters to the Executive Board in the context of part II of her annual report.

32. It is the role of UNICEF country representatives to ensure that adequate UNICEF staff resources are dedicated to evaluation, that communication with government officials and other partners facilitates the evaluation process, and that evaluation findings inform the decision-making process. Particularly critical in this is the oversight responsibility that UNICEF representatives have concerning the articulation of the IMEP and the respect for quality in the conduct of evaluations (according to the standards and norms set by the Evaluation Office). The representatives also have to ensure that their annual reports highlight the main evaluation findings and that evaluation reports are registered in the UNICEF evaluation database. Key evaluation activities carried out by the country office are to: develop and update an IMEP; ensure the conduct of evaluations and studies in accordance with the plan, including design, coordination and implementation; ensure the quality and appropriate use of evaluative activities, including MTRs; monitor the effectiveness and relevance of the UNICEF country programme; ensure follow-up of evaluation recommendations; and channel evaluative results into the development of programme strategies and policies.

33. The evaluation function at the regional level focuses on strengthening the monitoring and evaluation capacities of UNICEF offices and their government counterparts through the following: coordination with the Evaluation Office at headquarters; preparation of regional evaluation plans; provision of technical assistance and oversight to support effective monitoring and evaluation of country projects and programmes; and preparation and review of training plans. In accordance with their regional evaluation plans, the regional offices undertake thematic evaluations. They ensure the contribution of their respective region to global evaluations led by the Evaluation Office, and are also responsible for the conduct and oversight of country programme evaluations. The Regional Management Team plays a key role in establishing regional evaluation priorities. Key evaluation activities carried out by the regional office are to: coordinate the review of MTRs and major evaluation reports in the region, in cooperation with Programme Division and the Evaluation Office, and submit reports on results to the Executive Board; monitor evaluation activities and review evaluation reports in the region to ensure quality and relevance; ensure the evaluation of regional and multi-country initiatives within the region; synthesize evaluation results and lessons within the region; monitor the quality and use of evaluation results to strengthen programmes within the region; and facilitate the exchange of relevant information and experience in the region.

34. At headquarters, the Director of the Evaluation Office is responsible for overall development and implementation of the evaluation work plan, and reports to the Deputy Executive Director, Programme and Strategic Planning. The Evaluation Office has the following accountabilities: to conduct evaluations; and to seek to reinforce the organization's capacity to address evaluation needs, with an emphasis on the requirements of country offices and capacity-building in countries, in accordance with decisions made by the Executive Board and the Economic and Social Council. The Office provides technical guidance for a comprehensive system of performance management and leadership in the development of the corresponding approaches, methodologies and training for policy, strategic, programme and project evaluations. It monitors and reviews the quality of UNICEF-sponsored evaluations. The Office advises UNICEF senior management on the results of evaluations and related studies, with particular attention to the relevance of these results for organizational processes and policy development. The Office maintains the organizational database of evaluations and research studies, ensures access by UNICEF offices and promotes their dissemination and utilization through all available channels. The Office also collaborates with other United Nations agencies to increase the harmonization of evaluation activities and guidelines through the Inter-agency Working Group on Evaluation. The Evaluation Office is responsible for coordination at the global level with donors, major non-governmental organizations and other partners on the evaluation activities of programmes funded by donors or executed jointly with other organizations.

IV. MEASURES TAKEN TO STRENGTHEN THE EVALUATION FUNCTION

A. Weaknesses that need to be addressed

35. The last systematic and comprehensive review of the quality of evaluations conducted by UNICEF was undertaken in 1995. The objective of that review was to assess the relevance, quality and usefulness of UNICEF-supported evaluations and studies. Other objectives of the review included the estimation of the proportion of impact evaluations and the usefulness of non-impact evaluations and studies, the cost/benefit ratio, the issue of quantitative

versus qualitative approaches and the role in capacity-building, and the validation of the evaluation database in terms of the classification of the reports registered.

36. The reviewers concluded that the database was fairly accurate in the classification of the reports. It was found that 15 per cent of all reports registered and 35 per cent of the evaluations recorded dealt with the impact of UNICEF-funded activities. The review showed that 91 per cent of the non-impact evaluations and 31 per cent of the studies had relevant findings for possible reformulation of UNICEF-supported projects or programmes. Only 10 per cent of all reports were deemed worthless, and over 27 per cent of the sample reviewed were judged unjustified in terms of costs relative to objectives and actual outcomes. Very few studies and evaluations appeared to have specific and substantial capacity-building components. Six out of every seven studies used quantitative methods, but useful qualitative insights were also derived from most of the reports. Regarding the overall quality of the reports, 3 per cent were inadequate, 29 per cent were poor, 28 per cent were considered fair, 25 per cent were assessed as good and 15 per cent were rated excellent. The reviewers felt that the most common reasons for inadequate reporting might have been the lack of communication between consultants and UNICEF officers, and the lack of foresight (no baseline data, insufficient time and resource allocation or inadequate competence of the investigators in the field under study).

37. In 2000, a review of the UNICEF evaluation database was conducted. It found that the database had recorded some 11,000 evaluations and studies of UNICEF-supported projects and programmes since 1987. In 1992, the Executive Board requested the development of an enhanced database (decision 1992/24). A test version was first released in 1993, under the DOS environment, followed by a complete release in 1994. A CD-ROM was distributed in 1995 containing all of the information in the database. A new version was prepared in 1996 in the Windows format based on inputs from country and regional offices. Updated CD-ROMs were released in 1997, 1998 and 1999. At the beginning of 2002, the Intranet version of the evaluation database was released, allowing real-time, on-line access. Despite the long history of the evaluation database, the 2000 review revealed that it was not as widely known or used in UNICEF as had been expected.

38. In 1990, the Executive Board, noting the importance of evaluation as a management tool in improving programme effectiveness, requested that monitoring and evaluation plans and structures be elaborated and included in all country plans and major projects presented to it (decision 1990/4). In 1993, the Executive Board requested the Executive Director to ensure that country programme evaluations became an integral part of the country programme exercise, with a view to providing better assessments of the performance of the Fund (E/ICEF/1993/14, decision 1993/5). In the 1990s, the Office of Evaluation and Research piloted five evaluations of country programmes. Some country offices also experimented with approaches to the self-evaluation of country programmes. In 2001, the Evaluation Office undertook the evaluation of two country programmes. It is presently conducting the evaluation of the programme of cooperation with the Pacific island countries at the request of the Executive Board.

39. Due to the lack of systematization of the use of the evaluation function at each level of management, evaluations were being conducted mostly at the project level. This explains why over the past years, there has been little reporting on global evaluations. In addition, the lack of systematic use of country programme evaluations explains the discrepancies in the level, depth and scope of the annual MTRs and major evaluations. With the introduction of the MTSP-related multi-year evaluation plan, the eventual conduct of country programme evaluations by regional offices and the increase in the quality of project/activity evaluations led by country offices, there is a high expectation that organizational reporting on results at all levels of management will be enhanced significantly. The challenges during the MTSP period require that UNICEF go beyond the number, quality and use of evaluations at the individual project level to managing the evaluation process itself more systemically and effectively at country, regional and global levels. More emphasis needs to be placed on assessing the results, impact and effects of programmes and on evaluating country programmes as a whole, as well as assessing the impact of global policies.

B. Strengthening of in-country evaluation capacity

40. Two Economic and Social Council decisions request that particular attention be given to capacity-building in member countries. The first decision states that greater emphasis should be given to helping countries evaluate their programmes themselves and strengthen their own continuing evaluation machinery. The second decision indicates that further work should be undertaken in evaluation, particularly in relation to strengthening national capacities for evaluation and laying the basis for sound programming. UNICEF support to national evaluative activities is anchored at the country level, where the UNICEF country office plans, implements, monitors and follows up on activities of

cooperation with the Government.

41. At the regional level, UNICEF has been supporting the formation of evaluation associations, facilitating the collaboration and mutual strengthening of professional evaluators at the national level. In compliance with a decision of the Executive Board requesting that particular support be provided to African countries, the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office has been involved in the formation and strengthening of the African Evaluation Association and has provided secretarial support for the articulation of a professional code, the setting up of an evaluators roster and the hosting of annual meetings of the Association. Other regional offices have also been associated with the activities of regional evaluation associations, such as the Central American Evaluation Society and the Australian and Asian Evaluation Association.

C. Strengthening of the country offices

42. At the country programme level, the Evaluation Office has promoted the systematic use of the IMEP within the programme management cycle. Such an evaluation plan is a prerequisite to the gathering of key information necessary for a subsequent evaluation of the country programme. The IMEP is used to strengthen and link planning, monitoring, evaluation and research components of country programmes, and to provide a rational approach to trace relevant information supporting performance-related decision-making. The IMEP has also been adapted as a management tool for global-level programmes and initiatives, in particular for UNICEF efforts on HIV/AIDS. During 2001, IMEP methods and procedures were refined and integrated into the programme process and procedures training manuals. The Evaluation Office is further supporting the generalization of IMEP practices through the facilitation of regional training workshops as well as the dissemination of good practices.

43. The system of evaluation focal points in country offices was initiated in 1987 to strengthen the management of evaluation processes. In each office, a professional staff member is designated as the contact officer for evaluation matters. These focal points have the following responsibilities: to assist in designing, updating, implementing and monitoring plans to promote and support evaluations; to share evaluation results and disseminate lessons learned within the office and with partners for use in the programming process and project planning; and to prepare proposals and coordinate the training of both government and UNICEF staff for improved monitoring and evaluation. In order to reinforce the identification of skills required, the Evaluation Office is preparing a competency profile for evaluation officers which will be used as technical selection criteria for staffing purposes and also as a benchmark for identifying training requirements.

D. Strengthening of the regional offices

44. The multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF noted that a gap exists in the UNICEF accountability system at the level of accounting for the impacts and effects of UNICEF-supported programmes. Although UNICEF is an agency with complex partnership arrangements and goals, more emphasis must be placed on evaluating country programmes. This emphasis can be enhanced by the development of a clearer and stronger role for headquarters and regional offices in ensuring that evaluation is an integral part of country programme management and in playing a challenge function to ensure that country office staff address strategic-level issues in evaluations. In collaboration with regional offices, the Evaluation Office is conducting pilot evaluations of country programmes. A methodological approach for the conduct of country programme evaluations will be prepared in 2003. It is expected that by 2004, the regional office will gradually assume responsibility for conducting the evaluation of country programmes more systematically.

45. Over the years, regional offices have given attention to the function of monitoring the situation of children and programme performance. There is a need to strengthen the capacity of regional offices in evaluation. Regional monitoring and evaluation officers have to acquire the skills necessary for the conduct of complex evaluations. This is important in light of the thematic evaluations to be conducted by regional offices as contributions within the multi-year evaluation plan in the context of the MTSP, as well as in undertaking country programme evaluations.

E. Strengthening of New York headquarters

46. During 2001, the evaluation function at headquarters was re-engineered for the purpose of enabling UNICEF to use evaluation more strategically. In the context of the reorganization of the Programme Group, the Evaluation and Research Section of the EPP Division became the Evaluation Office, reporting to the Deputy Executive Director,

Programme and Strategic Planning. The Office is now more independent and better positioned to contribute at the strategic level. The evaluation function at headquarters will focus on the country programme level and on the institutional management of the organization as a whole. For the latter purpose, the Evaluation Office has prepared a multi-year evaluation plan in the context of the MTSP. It is presented in paragraphs 50-57 below.

47. A senior-level Evaluation Committee will be created to deal with evaluation matters. It will be the formal forum that reviews evaluation reports and decides on the approval of the recommendations contained therein. The Evaluation Committee will also review the annual follow-up reports on implementation of the recommendations. It will examine evaluation reports that have relevance at the global governance level. The reports produced by the Evaluation Office, as well as those produced by other headquarters divisions, will be reviewed. The Evaluation Committee will also review thematic evaluations conducted by the regional offices, as well as evaluations of country programmes of cooperation.

F. Fortifying management of the evaluation function

48. The evaluation function in UNICEF looks at activities undertaken or supported by UNICEF, examining their relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Because of its important contribution to organizational learning, evaluation feedback is an integral part of the programme process. For the purpose of improving organizational learning and improving performance, in 2001, the Evaluation Office created a real-time, on-line Intranet access to the UNICEF organizational memory on performance, findings and lessons learned. The evaluation and research database is particularly tailored to the needs of UNICEF field offices. It allows users to access abstracts and full reports of evaluations and studies conducted by UNICEF and other organizations. It also serves as a reference source on methodological tools. In addition, the website allows electronic conferencing to foster professional exchange on performance assessment matters.

49. Another measure that will fortify the evaluation function is the approval of the competency profile for the different levels of evaluation positions, which will provide clearer technical criteria to select candidates. The competency profile will also be used to assess the training needs of present incumbents. The Evaluation Office will provide a technical assessment of the candidates. It will also maintain a network communication and exchange with evaluation officers, and provide them with updates on evaluation findings, events and methodologies on an ongoing basis.

V. MULTI-YEAR EVALUATION PLAN IN SUPPORT OF THE MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGIC PLAN

50. The MTSP seeks to combine a reinforced results-oriented management approach with a human rights-based approach to planning and programming. The MTSP establishes five organizational priorities; defines more clearly strategic objectives and indicators; and strengthens the strategic use of the evaluation function. The five organizational priorities are girls' education; integrated early childhood development (ECD); immunization "plus"; fighting HIV/AIDS; and improved protection of children from violence, exploitation, abuse and discrimination. The strategies that UNICEF will use to pursue the organizational priorities include programme excellence; effective country programmes of cooperation; partnerships for shared success; influential information, communication and advocacy; and excellence in internal management and operations.

51. During the period of the MTSP, the evaluation function will focus on the country programme level and institutional management of the organization as a whole. It will look at the rationale, effectiveness, and administrative efficiency and economy of activities undertaken or supported by UNICEF. Thus, the organization will enhance accountability and performance in terms of managing for results for the benefits of children. The organizational priorities of the MTSP will guide the parameters of the multi-year evaluation plan. Evaluations will be conducted with an emphasis on programmes, and organizational and policy considerations. Where possible and feasible, UNICEF will participate in joint evaluations with United Nations agencies and other partners. UNICEF will have opportunities to collaborate with the OECD/DAC evaluation group on thematic evaluations such as the current one on basic education. In the context of the Common Country Assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework (CCA/UNDAF), country programmes can be evaluated taking a United Nations system perspective. UNICEF can participate in multi-stakeholder evaluations such as those assessing the impact of sector-wide approaches. At a national level, UNICEF can contribute to thematic and sectoral evaluations involving the Government and other partners. On the basis of information needs for organizational decision-making, the types of contribution may range from desk reviews of

existing evaluations and lessons learned to formal exercises involving stakeholders.

A. Evaluation of the organizational priorities

52. The five organizational priorities of the MTSP will guide the preparation of the annual global evaluation work plan. This annual global plan will incorporate the evaluation work led by headquarters, with contributions from the regions. At the end of the year, a summary of findings and lessons learned will be prepared and disseminated. Major findings will be incorporated in part II of the Executive Director's annual report.

53. The following thematic evaluation activities are planned during the period of the MTSP:

2002-2003	HIV/AIDS	Lessons learned from the evaluation of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
		Methodology for assessing behavioural and institutional outcomes
	Child protection	Education as prevention against child labour
	Immunization "plus"	Evaluation of selected programmes
	Integrated ECD	Methodology for country case studies
		Baseline for the case studies
2004-2005	Integrated ECD	Evaluation of ECD case studies
		Evaluation of Integrated Management of Childhood Illness case studies
	HIV/AIDS	Evaluation of behavioural and institutional outcomes
	Girls' education	African Girls' Education Initiative
	Child protection	Desk review of project review and lessons learned
		Evaluation of mainstreaming in country programmes

B. Evaluation of the country programme of cooperation

54. Evaluation of the country programme of cooperation will become a systematized feature of the country programme process by the end of the four-year MTSP period. During the first two years of the MTSP, the Evaluation Office at headquarters, in cooperation with regional offices, will develop basic principles and methodologies, and will conduct a limited number of field tests. As of the third year of the MTSP, regional offices will assume full responsibility in this regard. The process will take into account the CCA/UNDAF and explore possibilities for the conduct of such exercises in this context. Tools for real-time evaluation of country programmes in the early crisis phase will also be developed and tested by the Evaluation Office, in collaboration with the Office of Internal Audit, the Office of Emergency Programmes and regional offices. The planned schedule of activities is as follows:

2002-2003	Evaluation of country programmes	Methodology and pilot cases
	Evaluation of a country programme in a crisis situation	Methodology and testing
2004-2005	Evaluation of country	Training and full introduction

	programmes	
	Evaluation of a country programme in a crisis situation	Real-time evaluation to be used in the context of a major humanitarian crisis

C. Evaluation of organizational performance

55. The strategies used to implement the MTSP will guide the choice of functional and topical evaluations. Evaluation activities will be conducted for the purpose of assessing organizational performance in the context of excellence in internal management, advocacy and partnerships. In 2002, the Evaluation Office is conducting an evaluation of an information system (ChildInfo) and, in 2003, it will examine strategic considerations of the supply function.

D. Easier access to the organizational memory

56. During the MTSP period, the Evaluation Office, in collaboration with the UNICEF evaluators network, will improve the dissemination of monitoring and evaluation tools and findings from evaluation and research. In collaboration with the Division of Human Resources, an effort will be made to provide basic and advanced training in evaluation. In 2002, a web version of the training manual will be posted on the evaluation Intranet site. Over the 2002-2003 period, training sessions will be offered in each region to ensure that each incumbent in an evaluation position meets the technical criteria, in accordance with the competency profile of the position.

57. The launching of the evaluation website last February enables UNICEF to provide access to the organizational memory of the evaluation and research database on the desktop or laptop of each UNICEF employee. UNICEF staff can now review and download evaluation tools and methodological references. Taking advantage of the reports contained in the evaluation and research database, desk reviews will be conducted to distil lessons learned by themes, sectors and topics related to the MTSP priorities. In addition, the UNICEF evaluation website provides links to all major evaluation websites. This is a priceless support tool made available to each country office.

VI. DRAFT RECOMMENDATION

58. Evaluation activities conducted during the 1990s have had a noticeable impact on the quality of the organization's work and thinking in those fields that were the major emphasis of past evaluation efforts. The challenge now is to ensure that evaluation efforts and results are given greater importance across all fields of activity and at all levels of management in a more systematic and strategic way.

59. Therefore, the Executive Director recommends that the Executive Board adopt the following draft recommendation:

The Executive Board

Endorses the "Report on the evaluation function in the context of the medium-term strategic plan" (E/ICEF/2002/10) as the official policy statement on the evaluation system of UNICEF.

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UNICEF, *Programme Policy and Procedures Manual: Programme Operations*, UNICEF, New York, Revised May 2003, pp. 51-52.

Excerpt from Chapter 3, Section 3

The Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (IMEP)

79. The Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (IMEP) helps Country Offices to manage their monitoring, evaluation and research responsibilities (see Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, Section 6). The IMEP links planning and evaluation, and is prepared with the full involvement of planning/programme officers and the M&E officer. “Integrated” indicates the intent to merge planned research activities into a limited number of surveys, evaluations or studies in order to reduce costs and focus on strategic and possibly multi-sectoral outcomes. The initial multi-year IMEP is a summary table (ref. Table 3.4), which forms part of the MPO. It is recommended to limit the number of significant data gathering activities to no more than 3-5 per year. The IMEP will be reviewed and amended during the annual and Mid-Term reviews.

Table 3.4 Format of a Multi-year Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (IMEP)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Surveys, Studies (including SITAN related)					
Evaluations					
Landmarks					
M&E Systems					
Partners’ Activities					
M&E Capacity Building					
Publications					

80. The development of the MPO takes place simultaneously with the development of the draft CPD and revised CPD, drawing on text from the Strategy Paper and the CPD itself. A final review of the MPO is made by the Regional Director before it is signed, to ensure reflection as appropriate of comments of the Executive Board and the inclusion of the mandatory clauses, the Results Matrix and the IMEP. If it becomes clear that the Executive Board will approve the revised CPD on a no-objection basis at the January session, the Secretary of the Executive Board (OSEB) will advise the Regional Director and Representative that the MPO can be signed. A copy of the signed MPO should be sent to the Regional Director and the Director, Programme Division.

81. The Country Office may use the MPO to elaborate in greater detail the CP strategies, programmes or projects, provided that they remain consistent with the text and intent of the CPD. In some cases, Country Offices and national partners may jointly agree to prepare Programme Plans of Operations (PPOs) for each separate programme component. This is a country-level decision and is optional. A template for PPOs is included in Chapter 6.

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UNICEF, *Programme Policy and Procedures Manual: Programme Operations*, UNICEF, New York, Revised May 2003, p. 135.

Excerpt from Chapter 6

Section 6. Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (IMEP)

This section provides additional details for completion of the Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (IMEP). The IMEP is an essential element of the MPO (see Table 3.1), and flows directly from the corresponding LogFrames, where used.

- The monitoring component of the Five-Year Integrated plan refers to the *Monitoring of the Situation of Women and Children*. This is done through periodic surveys, such as the MICS.
- **Surveys and studies** supported by UNICEF may be national in scope (MICS) or limited to intervention areas (household surveys, health facility surveys). Important surveys conducted by partners such as DHS should be shown in “Activities of Partners” listing.
- **Evaluations**
- **Landmarks** help to synchronise data collection activities with decision-making events. This field helps to ensure that surveys, evaluations and studies planned for the first, second and third years of the programme period contribute to key Mid-Term Review questions; to time an evaluation with a major project review requested by a donor; whether UNICEF will have relevant data to influence government policies during a scheduled major political event, etc.
- **M&E Systems.** This category includes planned activities to strengthen the M&E systems at country office or national levels, e.g. upgrading national information systems such as HIS (Health Information System), CRIS (Country Reporting and Information System), and others.
- **M&E Capacity Building.** This listing will show scheduled capacity building activities for improved national data collection and research, for example a MICS training preceding the actual MICS survey; training preceding the introduction of ChildInfo, etc.
- **Partners’ Activities.** Data collection activities planned by partners, which are relevant to UNICEF’s work, should be identified and included in the Multi -Year plan. This can help avoid redundant efforts and build partnership in data collection.
- **Publications.** Some country offices have included the scheduling of publication of their monitoring, evaluation and research work in the Multi-Year IMEP. This practice facilitates better assessment of work load, improves planning of publication activities and attract greater attention of senior management on publication and documentation issues.

The workload, time and funds associated with monitoring, evaluation and research activities is often underestimated.

- Workload low: Programme partners can often rely on external institutions to design and implement *studies*
- Workload medium: Programme partners are usually involved in the design of *surveys, data analysis and reporting*, but the core of the work can be handled by an external team
- Workload heavy: Programme partners normally participate intensively in *evaluations*.

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Evaluation standards

The following are the programme evaluation standards developed by the American Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (AJCSEE) which have increasingly been promoted through professional evaluation associations, including the American and African evaluation associations. The African Evaluation Association has further adapted the original AJCSEE standards. Regardless of the version adopted, these standards can be used both as a guide for managing the evaluation process and to assess an existing evaluation. The standards highlight the considerations that must be weighed in formulating an evaluation design.

- **Utility:** seek to ensure that an evaluation will serve the information needs of intended users.
- **Feasibility:** seek to ensure that an evaluation will be realistic, prudent, diplomatic, and frugal.
- **Propriety:** seek to ensure that an evaluation will be conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard for the welfare of those involved in the evaluation, as well as those affected by its results.
- **Accuracy:** seek to ensure that an evaluation will reveal and convey technically adequate information about the features that determine the worth or merit of the programme being evaluated.

Utility

A. Stakeholder Identification

Persons involved in or affected by the evaluation should be identified so their needs can be addressed.

B. Evaluator Credibility

Persons conducting the evaluation should be both trustworthy and competent to perform the evaluation so its findings achieve maximum credibility and acceptance.

C. Information Scope and Selection

Information collected should be broadly selected to address pertinent questions about the programme and be responsive to the needs and interests of clients and other specified stakeholders.

D. Values Identification

The perspectives, procedures, and rationale used to interpret the findings should be carefully described so the bases for value judgements are clear.

E. Report Clarity

Evaluation reports should clearly describe the programme being evaluated, including its context, purposes, procedures, and findings so that essential information is provided and easily understood.

F. Report Timeliness and Dissemination

Significant interim findings and evaluation reports should be disseminated to intended users so they can be used in a timely fashion.

G. Evaluation Impact

Evaluations should be planned, conducted, and reported in ways that encourage follow-through by stakeholders to increase the likelihood that the evaluation will be used.

Feasibility

A. Practical Procedures

The evaluation procedures should be practical to keep disruption to a minimum while needed information is obtained.

B. Political Viability

The evaluation should be planned and conducted with anticipation of the different positions of various interest groups so their co-operation may be obtained, and possible attempts by any of these groups to curtail evaluation operations or to bias or misapply the results can be averted or counteracted.

C. Cost Effectiveness

The evaluation should be efficient and produce information of sufficient value so the resources expended can be justified.

Propriety

A. Service Orientation

Evaluations should be designed to help organisations address and effectively serve the needs of the full range of participants.

B. Formal Agreement

The obligations of the formal parties to an evaluation (what is to be done, how, by whom, when) should be agreed to in writing to ensure that they adhere to all conditions of the agreement or that they formally renegotiate it.

C. Rights of Human Subjects

Evaluations should be designed and conducted to respect and protect the rights and welfare of human subjects.

D. Human Interactions

Evaluators should respect human dignity and worth in their interactions with other persons associated with an evaluation so participants are not threatened or harmed.

E. Complete and Fair Assessment

The evaluation should be complete and fair in its examination and recording of strengths and weaknesses of the programme being evaluated so that strengths can be built upon and problem areas addressed.

F. Disclosure of Findings

The formal parties to an evaluation should ensure that the full set of evaluation findings along with pertinent limitations are made accessible to the persons affected by the evaluation, and any others with expressed legal rights to receive the results.

G. Conflict of Interest

Conflict of interest should be dealt with openly and honestly so it does not compromise the evaluation processes and results.

H. Fiscal Responsibility

The evaluator's allocation and expenditure of resources should reflect sound accountability procedures, and otherwise be prudent and ethically responsible to ensure they are accounted for and appropriate.

Accuracy

A. Programme Documentation

The programme being evaluated should be described and documented clearly and accurately.

B. Context Analysis

The context of the programme should be examined in enough detail so its likely influences can be identified.

C. Described Purposes and Procedures

The purposes and procedures of the evaluation should be monitored and described in enough detail so they can be identified and assessed.

D. Defensible Information Sources

The sources of information used in a programme evaluation should be described in enough detail so their adequacy can be assessed.

E. Valid Information

The information-gathering procedures should be chosen or developed and implemented to ensure that the interpretation is valid for the intended use.

F. Reliable Information

The information-gathering procedures should be chosen or developed and implemented to ensure that the information is sufficiently reliable for the intended use.

G. Systematic Information

The information collected, processed, and reported in an evaluation should be systematically reviewed, and any errors found should be corrected.

H. Analysis of Quantitative Information

Quantitative information should be appropriately and systematically analysed so evaluation questions are effectively answered.

I. Analysis of Qualitative Information

Qualitative information should be appropriately and systematically analysed so evaluation questions are effectively answered.

J. Justified Conclusions

The conclusions reached in an evaluation should be explicitly justified so stakeholders can assess them.

K. Impartial Reporting

Reporting procedures should guard against distortion caused by personal feelings and biases of any party to the evaluation so that evaluation reports fairly reflect the evaluation findings.

L. Meta-evaluation

The evaluation itself should be formatively and summatively evaluated against these and other pertinent standards so that its conduct is appropriately guided, and, on completion, stakeholders can closely examine its strengths and weaknesses.

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Evaluation Technical Notes [\[GO BACK\]](#)

No. 1

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Children Participating in Research, Monitoring And Evaluation (M&E) — Ethics and Your Responsibilities as a Manager

The trend of involving children more actively in M&E programmes as part of their right to participate brings many practical challenges and raises ethical considerations.

The ethical issues are complex and no straightforward guidelines exist. Children's rights are established in international law, where children are defined as those up to 18 years old, but the reality and meaning of childhood throughout the world differs. The context (cultural, political etc.), the capacities of each child, which in turn vary with age and stage of development, and the corresponding possibilities for participation all vary; so, too, then, will the response to ethical challenges in research and M&E practice (Boyden and Ennew, 1997).

The responsibilities lie with researchers/evaluators, those technical professionals involved in design of research, monitoring and evaluation activities and directly in data collection. However, **managers commissioning such activities are equally responsible for ensuring that ethical issues are identified and resolved in methodology design.**

This Evaluation Technical Note article explores the child's right to participate, related concepts and their implications for research and M&E activities. It also outlines key ethical considerations about whether and how children participate in research and M&E, and provides a checklist of questions for research and M&E managers.

Guidance from the Convention

The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides clear initial guidance for children's participation in programmes, and in research and M&E:

- All rights guaranteed by the convention must be available to all children without discrimination of any kind. Equity and non-discrimination are emphasised.
- The best interests of the child must be a major factor in all actions concerning children. This puts the onus on researchers and evaluators who encourage children's participation to consider carefully how this supports the best interest of each child.
- Children's views must be considered and taken into account in all matters that affect them. They should not be used merely as data from subjects of investigation.

The four articles related to participation further establish the parameters:

- **Article 12** states that children who can form their own views should have the right to express those views and have them taken into account. However, the right to participate and freedom of expression are not equated with self-determination. Each child's views are their "reality", which must be considered, but also must be weighed against the best interests of the child in any decisions eventually taken.



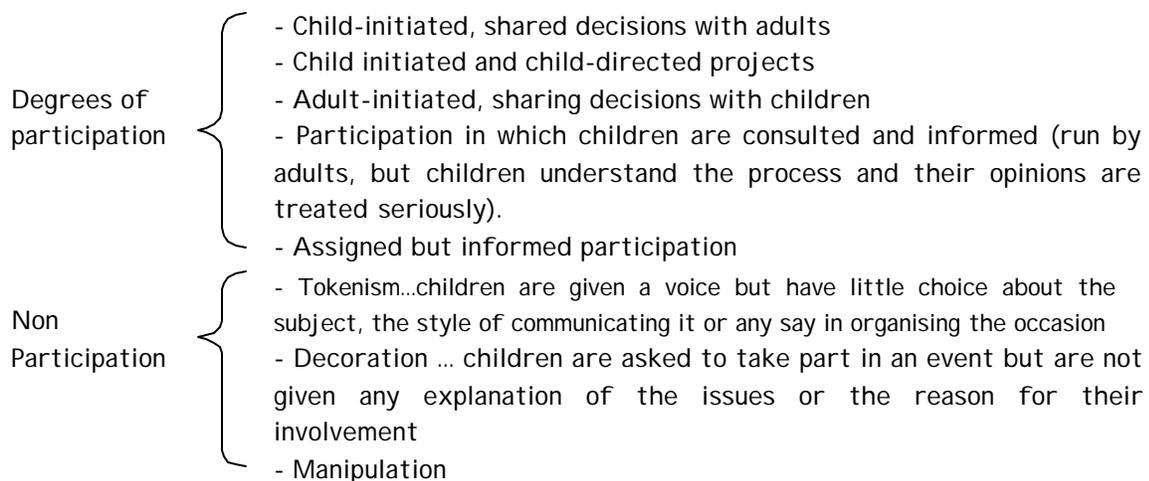
- **Article 13** states that children have the right to freedom of expression, which includes seeking, receiving and giving information and ideas through speaking, writing or in print, through art or any other media of the child's choice. Their participation is not a mere formality; children must be fully informed and must understand the consequences and impact of expressing their opinions. The corollary is that children are free to not participate, and should not be pressured. Participation is a right, not an obligation.
- **Article 14** establishes that State parties must respect children's right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as well as parents' or guardians' role in their exercising this right. Research and M&E activities seeking to involve children must clearly acknowledge and ideally seek to build on these respective roles.
- **Article 15** establishes that the States parties must recognise children's right to freedom of association and of peaceful assembly. As children's capacities evolve, they will increasingly participate and seek the representation of their perspectives in wider fora — at community, sub-national, national and global levels. Research and M&E activities can help this evolution along.

The Convention establishes that participation should be seen as both a process and an end in and of itself; that the very act of participation should be seen as contributing to the development of the children involved. This suggests highly participatory approaches to research and M&E where children are involved from design to the use of results.

What is participation?

While the Convention establishes a right to participate, M&E experience shows that "participation" is many things to many people — true for the participation of adults as much as for children. "Participatory" approaches to M&E range from those that survey the opinions of "beneficiaries" or primary stakeholders, to those where primary stakeholders are placed at the centre of the process, from design to implementation, to analysis and follow-up of M&E exercises. The premises and limitations of the model and methodology must be clearly stated — we must call it what it is.

Several different angles can be taken to define the nature of children's participation. Roger Hart (Hart, 1992) used an eight-degree scale:



Efforts that fall under tokenism, decoration and manipulation not only fail in their objective to foster the participation of children, but can also discredit the effort and the organisations involved, ultimately undermining the meaning of the right to participate.

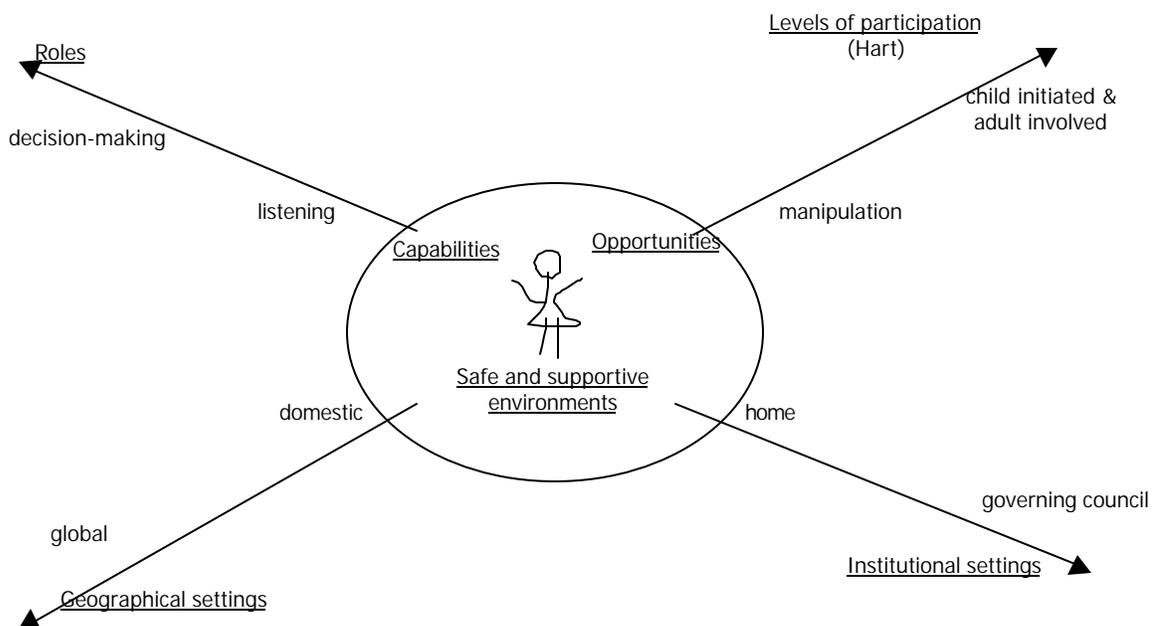
This ladder includes the *relationship* between children and adults (Rajani, 2000), be they programme managers or researchers, which is important. The increasing degrees of participation suggest increasingly evolved capacities of children *and* corresponding capabilities of adults towards encouraging the participation of children.

Context is also important. Political, social and economic contexts will have their own institutional norms and practices at different levels (national, sub-national, community, family), and in different fora will favour (or limit) participation to different degrees. Analysing context can reveal how it limits participation, as well as how participation can be increased.

Rakesh Rajani's "Framework for Promoting Effective Adolescent Participation" (see page 4) links the above two aspects — context and the relationship between children and adults — with a other factors to define the nature of participation.

It illustrates children's roles from listening to active decision-making roles, and the different spheres in which they participate, both in terms of geographical and institutional settings. Three key contributing factors underlie these facets of participation: the individual capabilities of children, the supporting environment and the opportunities created for participation. Programme interventions that strive to build children's (adolescent's) participation must do so by trying to influence and change these contributing factors

"A Framework for Promoting Effective Adolescent Participation" (Rajani, 2000: 13)





These two frameworks are not only good for designing programmes, but for defining the participatory activities for research and M&E exercises as well, i.e. where children will participate, in what role and through what type of interaction with adults. If the M&E activity itself is designed to build participation, then managers and evaluators must specify how the activity will influence children's capabilities and their supporting environment and therefore their opportunities for participation.

Ethical issues

Several complex ethical issues emerge around children's participation in research and M&E without a guideline on how to respond to any of them. They include:

- **Accountability.** Since researchers and programme managers are accountable to a wide range of stakeholders (including *primary stakeholders*, i.e. those intended to benefit from programme interventions), and the involvement of primary stakeholders in research and M&E activities is an expression of this accountability, then research and M&E should also involve the participation of children. Their participation is relevant not only where planned interventions and issues specifically affect them, but also where they, as members of the wider community, are affected (e.g. in relation to safe drinking water). It must be clear in initial research and M&E design proposals what role will children play and how will they be involved.
- **Protection of children's best interests.** This has very clear and powerful implications for the *process* of research and M&E as well as for the *dissemination of its results*.
 - Children **must not be exposed to risks** if there is no benefit to them. These include the psychological effects on the individual child of participating in the activity (for example, in cases of abuse where the fears and pain of past experiences re-emerge); the social costs of participating such as negative effects on family and community relations; more acute threats such as reprisals by people who feel threatened by children's participation; and misuse of information, ranging from sensationalist media attention or to more sinister uses in situations of conflict and humanitarian crisis. Weighing these risks against possible benefits requires careful judgement, particularly where risks to individual children are done in the name of broad sometimes incremental societal changes.
 - Those leading and carrying out research and M&E activities are also responsible **for protecting children from placing themselves at risk**, even where a child might be willing to participate and voice their views (Boyden and Ennew, 1997; Boyden 2000).
 - The responsibility to protect children may also entail **withholding information** from children where that information may place them at risk (Boyden and Ennew, 1997). Children may not always be able to cope with the implications of information received or may not be able to judge adequately when and with whom to share that information.
 - Research and M&E activities must be able to ensure **confidentiality**. However, information may at times reveal that a child is at risk or is a risk to others, which is why design of research and M&E activities must include **guidelines for breaking confidentiality and intervention**, including defining what follow-up and referrals can be made. Children must be made aware of the limits to confidentiality and possible intervention based on what is in their best interests.



- **Informing children.** Research and M&E managers are responsible for ensuring that children receive the information they need to form and express their views as well as to decide whether they choose to express them at all. To “inform” should be understood as meaning more than simply providing information. How information is conveyed must be appropriate to the context and to children's capabilities. How informed children are affects how their views can be interpreted.
- **Informed consent.** The focus of most ethical guidelines is on research in the West, this has often involved signed consent forms to ensure that participants in research are aware of any potential implications of their involvement (by the same token to protect researchers from liability). Researchers must respect the consent regulations of the countries in which they are working, however, parental consent is not an adequate standard in light of the rights of the child. Informing children of the potential implications is required. Further, consent should not be a one-time event in the course of a child's participation. It should be a negotiation of the parameters and limits of his/her participation, an ongoing exchange in which a child's views and best interests are paramount (Alderson, 1995). All issues of negotiating consent and encouraging children to express themselves must be carried out with clear recognition of the natural power imbalance between children and adults.
- **Equity and non-discrimination.** Those involved in research and M&E must ensure that *selection* of those children who participate and the *processes and methods* used serve to correct, not reinforce, patterns of exclusion. This requires attention to socio-economic barriers including gender and age discrimination as well as to the different ways and capacities in which children express themselves.
- **Respect of children and their views.** Those involved in design must choose methods and processes that best facilitate children expressing their views. Methods will most often be qualitative, and processes will likely be capacity building or participatory. However, respecting children's views does not mean allowing them to dictate conclusions. A child's input, like that of any other stakeholder, must be weighed as one perspective and interpreted in light of his/her experience, interests and evolving capacities. Assumptions and frameworks for interpreting information must be appropriate to the children involved and transparent to ensure credibility with users of research and M&E results.
- **Ownership.** Children must be informed of the results of the research. And since children will likely express themselves by diagramming and drawing, they should also be given rights of ownership of the research “data”.
- **Methodological limitations.** It is unethical to carry out data collection if the design will not achieve the research objectives or respond to evaluation questions. Methodological limitations must be considered carefully, including the potential effects of power relations between children and adults. In order to increase children's participation, methodologies will likely tend towards the more qualitative with more specific adaptations for the children involved, and findings will be representative of narrower populations. Those involved in initial research and M&E design must balance degrees of participation of children with the credibility and breadth of application of research and M&E results.



Questions For Managers Of Monitoring, Evaluation & Research Activities:

The following is adapted¹ from P. Alderson (1995), "Listening to Children: Children, ethics and social research", Barnardos, primarily from "Ten Topics in Ethical Research" (p.2-6) with detailed extracts on key issues in boxed text. While the original questions refer to research, they are equally relevant for UNICEF monitoring and evaluation work.

UNICEF offices are responsible for ensuring that these questions are considered in the design of the monitoring, evaluation and research activities in which they are involved.

1. Purpose

- Is the topic worthwhile? How are the findings likely to benefit children? How will they add to what is already known?
- If the findings are meant to benefit certain children, who are they and how might they benefit?
- Assuming findings are to be used to facilitate decision-making, who do they target? Is children's role in decision-making facilitated by this activity?

2. Costs and hoped-for benefits

- What contributions are children asked to make, such as activities or responses to be tested, observed or recorded? Is this a one-off contribution or, as in the case of some monitoring activities, will this be repeated?
- Might there be risks or costs — time, inconvenience, embarrassment, intrusion of privacy, sense of failure or coercion, fear of admitting anxiety? Also, consider retribution in contexts of conflict.

"Are attempts made to avoid or reduce harms? Such as rehearsing with children a way of saying 'no' when they do not want to reply, assuring them that this will be respected and they will not be questioned about why they say 'no', or ensuring that children who feel worried or upset about the research can talk to someone about it afterwards? It can be useful to try to find out gently why young people want to refuse. Does the research seem boring or irrelevant? Could it be improved with their help?" (Alderson, 1995 -19)

- Might there be benefits for children who take part — satisfaction, increased confidence or knowledge, time to talk to an attentive listener, an increased role in decision-making processes affecting them?
- Are there risks and costs if the research, monitoring or evaluation activity is not carried out?
- How can the researchers or managers of research and M&E promote possible benefits of the work?

¹ Questions were rephrased and adapted, and a very few additions made, to apply to both monitoring and evaluation as well as to make the list more appropriate to developing country contexts. Some sections considered less relevant to UNICEF work have been deleted.



- What is planned to prevent or reduce any risks? What is the guidance regarding data collectors/researchers response to children who wish to refuse or withdraw? What will be the procedure with children who become distressed (e.g. if they simply feel uncomfortable, or if participation requires them to relive or experience emotional or psychological trauma) on the spot and in terms of referrals and follow-up? What steps are taken to ensure the protection and supervision of the children involved, including against bad practices by data collectors/researchers?
- Are the methods being tested with a pilot group? Will risks and costs be reassessed after piloting and what protection is offered to children involved in the pilot?

3. Privacy and confidentiality

- How will the names of children be obtained, and will they be told about the source?
- Does the selection method allow children and parents to opt into the activity (e.g. to volunteer for selection)? Is the selection method intrusive or coercive?
- Will interviews directly with individuals be conducted in a quiet, private place?
- Can parents be present or absent as the child prefers?
- In rare cases, if front line researchers/evaluators think that they must report a child's confidences, such as when they think someone is in danger, will they try to discuss this first with the child? Do they warn all children that this might happen? Who will they report to and who/how many people will be involved? Who will guide this process?
- Will personal names be changed in records and in reports to hide the child's identity? What should be done if children prefer to be named in reports?
- Will the data collection records, notes, tapes, films or videos, be kept in lockable storage space? Who will have access to these records, and be able to identify the children?
- When significant extracts from interviews are quoted in reports, should researchers/evaluators first check the quotation and commentary with the child or parent concerned? What should be done if respondents want the reports to be altered?
- Is there some verification that the field researchers in direct contact with the children do not represent a risk to children, i.e. have the appropriate values, attitudes and skills to deal with each child ethically and compassionately?
- Should records be destroyed when the research or M&E activity is completed or when related programme activity ends?
- Will the children be re-contacted at different points during the course of the programme for ongoing monitoring or evaluation, or is it ethical to ask the same children to take part in another research activity? In either case, how will the list of contact names be managed, stored?



4. Selection, inclusion and exclusion

- Why have the children concerned been selected to take part in the activity?
- Have efforts been made to reach marginalised, indigenous or disadvantaged children? Are issues of accessing these children satisfactorily dealt with in the methodology?
- If some of the children selected do belong to disadvantaged groups, have the researchers made allowance for any extra problems or anxieties they may have? Does the methodology accommodate their differing capacities?
- Have some children been excluded because, for example, they have speech or learning difficulties? Can the exclusion be justified?
- Are the findings intended to be representative or typical of a certain group of children? If so, have the children in the study been sufficiently well selected to support these claims?
- Do the design and planned numbers of children to be involved allow for refusals and withdrawals? If too many drop out, the effort may be wasted and therefore unethical. Consider also the possibility of withdrawals at different points in repeated monitoring activities.
- If the issue or questions being investigated are about children, is it acceptable only to include adult subjects?

5. Funding

- Are the children's and parents' or carers' expenses repaid?
- Should children be paid or given some reward after helping with the activity? Does the role of the children play a factor in whether or not they are paid, i.e. if children are active decision-makers as opposed to interviewees?
- How do these practices compare to those of other organisations working in the same region?
- How do the practices of paying children compare with payment of adults involved (e.g. parents, teachers, other community members)?

6. Process of review and revision of ToRs and methodological proposal

- Have children or their carers helped to plan or comment on the methodological proposal ?
- Has a committee, a small group or an individual reviewed the protocol specifically for its ethical aspects and approach to children?
- Is the methodological design in any way unhelpful or unkind to children?
- Is there scope for taking account of comments and improving the design?
- Are the researchers accountable to anyone, to justify their work? Are researchers', managers' and other stakeholders' responsibilities vis-à-vis ethical practices clearly established?
- What are the agreed methods of dealing with complaints?



7. Informing children, parents and other carers

- Are the children and adults concerned given details about the purpose and nature of the research or M&E activity, the methods and timing, and the possible benefits, harms and outcomes? If children are not informed, how is this justified?
- Does a researcher/evaluator also encourage children and adults concerned to ask questions, working with an interpreter if necessary?
- If the research is about testing two or more services or products, are these explained as clearly and fully as possible?
- Are key concepts, such as 'consent', explained clearly?
- Are children and/or adults given a clearly written sheet or leaflet to keep, in their first language? If literacy is an issue, how is this handled in terms of ensuring children and their carers can access and review information provided about the activity at a later time?
- Does the leaflet give the names and address of the research/data collection/ evaluation team? How can children contact someone from the team if they wish to comment, question or complain?

One balance to consider is between over- and under-informing subjects, in either case preventing them from making a well-founded decision. A core of basic information in a leaflet, with suggested questions and further discussion can help to achieve a reasonable balance. This can combine what the reasonable researcher would tell, what a prudent subject would ask, and what the individual subject wants to know. (Alderson, 1995 - 20)

8. Consent

- As soon as they are old enough to understand, are children told that they can consent or refuse to take part in the activity?
- Do they know that they can ask questions, perhaps talk to other people, and ask for time before they decide whether to consent?
- Do they know that if they refuse or withdraw from the activity this will not be held against them in anyway?
- How do the researchers/evaluators help the children to know these things, and not to feel under pressure to give consent?
- How do they respect children who are too shy or upset to express their views freely?
- Are parents or guardians asked to give consent?
- How will the situation be handled if a child wants to volunteer but the parents refuse?
- Is the consent written, oral or implied? What is legally required and appropriate in the context?
- If children are not asked for their consent, how is this justified?



9. Dissemination

- Will the children and adults involved receive short reports on the main findings or other forms of feedback?
- Are the capacities of children and their preferences for how they receive feedback taken into consideration?

10. Impact on children

- Does the research, monitoring or evaluation activity have any impact on children's capabilities, on the degree to which their environment is supportive of their participation (e.g. a change to attitudes of parents or other adults, to customs or to laws) or on future opportunities for participation (e.g. a change to practices in schools or other fora where children may participate; the creation of new fora, organisations etc.)? Was any such impact planned for in the design?
- Have children involved been realistically prepared for the expected impact, whether small or large?
- Besides the effects of the activity on the children involved, how might the conclusions affect larger groups of children?
- What models of childhood are assumed, e.g. children as weak, vulnerable and dependent on adults; as immature, irrational and unreliable; as capable of being mature moral agents; as consumers? How do these models affect the methods of collecting and analysing data.
- Is the approach reflexive, in that those involved in data collection and analysis critically discuss their own prejudices?
- Do they use positive images in reports and avoid stigmatising, discriminatory terms?
- Do they try to listen to children and in children's own terms, while aware that children can only speak in public through channels designed by adults?
- Do they try to balance impartial assessment with respect for children's worth and dignity?

“What will the intended and possible impact be on children? How will the research be done? And, in some cases, should it be done at all? These questions entail taking account of the status of children in society. An 'impact on children' statement for each research proposal would examine the likely effects of the research questions, methods and conclusions on the child subjects and on all young people affected by the findings. Will the research reinforce prejudice about children's inabilities and faults by portraying them as victims or villains? Or will researchers examine these beliefs and devise methods which investigate children's capacities and their needs and interests from the children's points of view? ”
(Alderson, 1995 - 41)



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