

Report on the member state consultation on the medium-term strategic plan for 2014-2017.

To be read in conjunction with materials, including agenda, presentations and background papers for the meeting, available at <http://www.unicef.org/strategicplan/index.html>.

The Director, Policy and Strategy (DPS), thanked Executive Board members for their engagement in the review and preparation process of the next MTSP. He noted that the workshop and presentations would build on earlier discussions on the proposed strategic focus, plan and narrative of the MTSP, including discussion at the February Executive Board and feedback from other formal and informal consultations over the past several months. He observed the plan will have several audiences, both internal to UNICEF and beyond. The plan also needs to serve multiple purposes: focusing and prioritizing UNICEF's work, motivating those working on behalf of children and women, contributing to UN coherence and other ECOSOC mandates, and holding UNICEF accountable for results. He concluded his opening remarks by thanking the many entities that have already contributed to the formulation of the document, including the Executive Board, other Country Governments, NGOs and private sector donors such as UNICEF National Committees.

The Director, DPS, then presented an overview of the end-of-cycle review and the medium-term strategic plan process to date, introducing a proposal for an MTSP 'chapeau' that would clarify that all of the result areas and programme strategies within the plan contribute to the overall goal of protecting and promoting the human rights of children, in particular by promoting equity.

The Deputy Director, Programmes, presented on the seven proposed results of the new MTSP and offered explanations on the main characteristics of outcomes, key determinants for child well being and the distribution of indicators. Additionally, he expanded on the varied nature of outcomes related to utilization, behaviour and participation; access and quality of services and humanitarian interventions. He acknowledged that there are outstanding questions on how coherence and consistency, cross-sectoral links and community/child participation are reflected in the matrices; but noted that the current draft reflects a conscious effort to strengthen resilience of communities and to reach children in fragile situations.

The Senior Advisor, Gender, presented on the use of a gender 'lens' to inform planning, monitoring, quality assurance and reporting in the next MTSP, noting that this was one example of several 'lenses' that will be included in the plan. She articulated that with the lens, more emphasis is placed on outcome and output level results, both through the use of gender markers - specific indicators in focus areas - that can also be used to track expenses and through broader benchmarks on gender strategies and UNICEF goals on gender equality and empowerment. Additionally, she emphasized the cross-sectoral nature of UNICEF gender work.

Delegations welcomed the presentations and the opportunity to provide feedback and input to the process. Multiple delegations had queries over the use of 'universality'. Some noted that specific issues related to boys were not visible in the plan, while others asked for clarification on UNICEF engagement in high-income countries in places where there is high disparity. Many expressed interest in the proposed child equity index, noting the importance of enhanced

monitoring and evaluation tools, while also asking how the index will work and whether it will serve as a basis for decision-making on resource allocation.

Some speakers noted that resource allocation methodology and criteria were not clearly articulated in the presentations. Multiple delegations emphasized that the next plan should be linked to the post-2015 and SDG discussions, with some stressing that system-wide coherence, delivering as one and the QCPR could be more strongly reflected in the plan. Questions were asked about how it would account for country level programming, regional efforts and localized constraints and partnerships in the matrices. Delegations expressed that they were looking forward to receiving the proposed MTSP narrative.

Delegations acknowledged the challenges in designing and communicating a simplified theory of change for the MTSP. Many commented on the ‘chapeau’ and, while affirming the underlying tenets of equity and rights, posed questions on the terms and the relationship between the chapeau, normative principles and outcomes. Delegations asked for more information on what UNICEF means by ‘lens’ generally, with specific questions about the ‘life-cycle’ lens. Some speakers welcomed more explanation on the benchmarks for programme strategies and the value added of the social inclusion result area. Delegations suggested that outcome levels could be more precise and short-term, more clearly linked to impact level and that there is a need for indicators that address quality of service. Several speakers affirmed the difficulty in measuring results in some areas, but indicated they would like to see full reporting on different impact level results areas, including on how operations supports results. In view of the attention to monitoring and participation in the next MTSP, some delegations stated the need to better reflect access of communities to relevant information in local languages and easy to understand format. Furthermore, they raised concerns over how cross-sectoral and multisectoral links between results-areas will be strengthened as most of the proposed results are sectoral.

The Director, Emergency Programmes, highlighted proposals for strengthening the link between emergency and development programming in the next MTSP. He presented on how the new plan will use a humanitarian ‘lens’, which includes strategy and vision that supports results, and a humanitarian ‘beam’, which is comprised of a series of measurable outcomes that are reflected in all result areas.

He noted the importance of enhancing resilience and ensuring greater synchronicity between the humanitarian responses that save lives and protect rights in humanitarian situations and addresses underlying causes of vulnerability through humanitarian response and development programmes. He noted that UNICEF adapts its approach and programming strategies based on country context and that there are trends which can be considered for planning purposes, based on an analysis of exposure to risks and national system capacity to prevent and manage shocks.

Delegations commended UNICEF for its strong humanitarian work and expressed support of using both the ‘lens’ and ‘beam’ in UNICEF’s humanitarian action in the MTSP. Some speakers sought clarification on whether there are mechanisms to ensure humanitarian action does not impede ongoing development programming, and welcomed further information on the various operating contexts and how UNICEF adjusts its approach and strategies to these contexts.

Several delegations discussed issues related to the measurement of outcomes, suggesting that it may be useful to consider populations over numbers of countries.

The Deputy Executive Director, Management, emphasized that the proposed MTSP will be accompanied for the first time by an integrated budget that supports the implementation of the strategic plan across all results areas. He noted that this will provide an opportunity to consolidate the review and approval of results and resource requirements, both of which were previously done through different documents and at different Executive Board sessions. He also noted the integrated budget will provide comprehensive information on all resources (core and non-core) in a transparent and simple manner, including their proposed uses in support of the results and activities and grouped by cost categories. The cost classification categories, as approved by the Executive Board, are harmonized and currently in use by UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF.

The Deputy Director, Division of Financial and Administrative Management, presented a conceptual overview and the proposed format of the integrated budget. She noted that estimated resource requirements for Country Programmes will be presented for information only, as these will be approved in separate Executive Board sessions, whereas resource requirements for other cost categories - development effectiveness, management, special purpose and United Nations Development Coordination - will be submitted for approval. Additionally, she discussed a proposed model and example of the integrated results and resources framework, which will link resources: to impact level results for programmes; to management results through harmonized functional clusters; to development effectiveness through organizational-specific functional clusters; and to United Nations Development Coordination and special purpose.

The Deputy Director, Public Sector Alliances and Resource Mobilization office, provided an overview of revenue received through 2012 for the current MTSP, as well as key findings from reviews and recommendations for mobilizing both unrestricted and thematic funding. She emphasized the potential to grow unrestricted funding in the medium term and highlighted the importance of promoting strategic and dynamic partnerships. Additional changes to be incorporated into the next MTSP plan and funding architecture include developing an integrated resource mobilization strategy and improving risk management and sharing measures to mitigate and reduce subsidization of losses in non-core funding with core resources.

Delegations had a favourable reaction to the budget presentation but look forward to receiving additional detailed information, including on harmonization, terminology and details on promoting high-quality funding. It was recommended that UNICEF should look into new revenue streams in the private sector and emerging economies; consider introducing incentives into funding mechanisms and be willing to turn down funds that do not fit the strategic plan. UNICEF was encouraged to provide a presentation on transparency, to offer specificity on how to it measures value-for-money; and to further explain how multi-sectoral efforts and also operations are accounted for in funding by thematic baskets.

Delegations provided input on the incorporation of results-based management into the plan, with some encouraging UNICEF to link outputs and outcomes as per the UNDG handbook. Several parties indicated an interest in receiving more information on the results framework. The

Director, Evaluations Office, responded to queries on transparency and results-monitoring, emphasizing that evaluation helps to improve performance, while also assessing relevancy, efficiency and effectiveness. He noted that the Evaluation Office will develop a plan to conduct global level evaluations that will monitor MTSP implementation and that provide feedback and evidence on indicators.

The Director, Policy and Strategy, closed the consultation by encouraging and asking attendees to continue providing input in the context of the multiple purposes and audiences for the plan that were discussed at the beginning of the day. He pointed out that there was still room to make many improvements to the documentation before it was submitted for the next Executive Board but that any significant restructuring could not be incorporated in an official draft for June, given time constraints. He commented on the positive feedback on the relevance of adopting a plan that acknowledged UNICEF's universal mandate, and also noted that there seemed to be wide consensus on the proposed approaches to humanitarian action and gender within the plan. He identified the need for additional information on the use of 'lenses', and also further clarification on benchmarks and strategies. He also recognized open questions on the articulation and measurement of the 'chapeau', the relationship of human rights to equity, the reflection of ECOSOC and UN coherence in the plan, and requests for more information on the level of proposed funding. He confirmed that a number of supplementary documents are forthcoming, and that further details will be shared regarding upcoming informal consultations. He noted that written comments on the current version of the draft matrices and any issues from the workshop received by end of March could be incorporated into the formal documentation being prepared for submission to the June board, which must be completed by 8 April 2013. He reiterated that submission of written comments and further dialogue should also continue after the end of March, although comments received from April onwards would not be reflected in formal Executive Board documentation until September.