

Context

Mandate: UNICEF is mandated to advocate for the protection and promotion of the rights of the child, to meet children's basic needs and expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. Its strategic plan (2006-9) focuses on: young child survival and development; basic education and gender equality; HIV/AIDS and children; child protection; and policy advocacy and partnerships for children's rights. In humanitarian situations, UNICEF is cluster lead for data communication; nutrition; and water, sanitation and hygiene; has a substantive role in health and protection; and is likely to co-lead education with Save the Children.

Size: UNICEF is active in 156 countries, employs almost 9300 staff, and estimates expenditure of US\$2.7bn for 2006. All resources are donated voluntarily, with 64% from government grants.

Key Issues: UNICEF is undergoing widespread change: first, as it moves from project implementation to a more strategic, policy-oriented approach, focused in support of national programmes and technical capacity building, and second, to respond to UNICEF's growing humanitarian responsibilities (with significant challenges in ensuring UNICEF can respond effectively to humanitarian emergencies). These changes are being done in the context of broader UN reforms for system-wide coherence. UNICEF shows commitment to UN reform (as member of the UN Development Group Executive Committee, High Level Committee on Management, High Level Committee on Programmes, Chief Executives Bureau (CEB) and as stated in its position paper on UN reform). UNICEF is leading and supporting reform in the country pilots to "Deliver as One", but has not communicated its vision of a reformed UNICEF within a more coherent UN system, nor set a plan and timeframe to deliver on current or proposed reforms. An Organisational Review, commissioned by the Executive Director in 2006, will report to the Executive Board in 2007; this should clarify how UNICEF will adapt and change. How UNICEF is funded is also a key challenge for the organisation: with less than 40% now provided as regular resources, UNICEF's ability to implement its strategic plan is undermined by significant fund-raising, and short-term, often project-based or service delivery approaches with high transaction costs. UNICEF's need to raise funds on an ongoing basis encourages publicly promoting its work to the detriment of greater cooperation and partnership, and places accountability for these initiatives in favour of donors rather than national governments. Improved partnerships, including harmonisation and integration with the UN family and beyond, would further strengthen UNICEF's results and contributions to the MDGs. Although UNICEF is valued as an advocate for children's rights, with neutrality and technical competence to work well with national governments, it is seen to be reluctant to challenge governments on sensitive issues, a key part of its mandate as international lead on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, preferring to adopt quiet diplomacy to make unacceptable situations visible.

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Is UNICEF *BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE*?

Summary UNICEF expresses commitment to continual improvement and change in support of its strategic plan and UN system wide coherence. But progress on the latter is difficult to discern in the absence of a clear communication on what UN system wide coherence means for the organisation in practice, how it links to the organisational review, and how widespread change will be managed and resourced. UNICEF has strong internal mechanisms for lesson learning. Staff development is an organisational priority and more resources are planned in the future. Results Based Management is beginning to have an impact but needs to give priority to reporting on outcomes and relating acquired knowledge and lessons into programming.

Commitment to Continual Improvement

How committed is UNICEF to UN Reform?

✓ UNICEF's Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) 2006-9 and its position paper on UN Reform commits UNICEF to common country programmes, strengthened Resident Coordinator system, rationalisation of field presence, and closer engagement and linkage of respective business plans of UN agencies.⁵

⇔ Although UNICEF has moved forward in a number of operational areas, such as harmonisation, alignment with country programmes through the UNDAF with national development policies and strategies, and collaboration on initiatives of common services and offices, UNICEF has yet to fully define and communicate its vision and position on UN reform or make tangible progress.¹

× Outside observers continue to detect ambivalence in UNICEF about UN reform (at least in the development sphere) and at times UNICEF has been seen as a negative force.²

✓ UNICEF is a member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) which is the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance involving key UN and non-UN humanitarian partners.²³

Does the Board require management to act on performance results?

✓ Board decisions often ask management to take account of and report on the lessons from results and evaluations.³

Building Knowledge and Lesson Learning

Does UNICEF have adequate mechanisms for spreading lesson learning?

✓ UNICEF has very effective mechanisms for disseminating good practice and lessons learned, including a widely used intranet system. Constant efforts are being made to update and strengthen these systems.³

Results Based Management

To what extent does UNICEF manage by results?

⇔ UNICEF has made progress in developing its RBM systems, particularly through the strengthening of its results-based planning framework, the MTSP. However, the quality of the RBM process and indicators varies significantly across the organisation depending on the importance assigned it by regional/country staff.⁴

⇔ Results-based management is starting to have an impact on its approach to monitoring and reporting, but more work is still required to fully bed in approaches that give priority to outcomes.³

⇔ Although programming is becoming more results oriented, it is far from managing by results.²

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Staff Development

What is the average number of days training per staff member?

✓ UNICEF seeks continuous and systematic improvement of staff capacity to learn and adapt to rapidly changing roles and responsibilities. Its MTSP 2006-9 highlights staff learning and development as an organisational priority, and includes a target to double spending in this area by 2009.⁵

✓ In 2005 36% of UNICEF staff spent more than 10 days on planned learning (with a target of 50% by 2009).⁶

⇔ UNICEF is required to lead and coordinate in many areas of its Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies (CCCs). Their capacity in coordination skills is variable and requires more time investment. The CCCs and SPHERE standards for humanitarian response are not well known by UNICEF teams. In addition there has not been sufficient technical training through the learning programme in the CCC sectors. In particular, learning and training is weak in child protection. Staff confidence in applying international legal frameworks, policy approaches and good practice is essential to ensure strong programmes and advocacy for children affected by armed conflict, including monitoring and reporting of human rights violations.⁷

⇔ In the Tsunami response, key constraints were availability of staff experienced in humanitarian response. UNICEF needs to develop its understanding of the essential elements of its leadership role in sectors like child protection education and water and sanitation.¹⁸

What are staff resignation rates?

Not available

Does UNICEF have Investors in People accreditation or similar?

Not known

What is the level of staff satisfaction?

⇔ Not currently available but indicator in place for 2006-9 MTSP: “% of staff indicating a sense of well-being in different functional areas”.⁵

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How well is UNICEF *MANAGING* its *RESOURCES*?

Summary UNICEF has a clear mandate and strategy with good financial management at the strategic level. In spite of providing policy and direction to the regions and country offices, financial management remains weak at the country level and financial procedures are not fully suited to emergencies. There is a good trend on administration costs declining as a proportion of total. UNICEF is undergoing an organisational review to highlight and address the changes that need to be made to deliver its MTSP commitments. Human resource planning for emergencies has been weak and organisation-wide systems for surge capacity and mainstreaming have not progressed as fast as required. Although Regional offices are identified as a crossroad of responsibility and authority, there are concerns relating to resources, accountability and how well they respond to functions.

Corporate Governance and Strategy

Is UNICEF's corporate strategy based on a clear definition of mandate and comparative advantage?

✓ DFID's MEFF scored UNICEF well on corporate governance and strategy, owing in large part to a coherent Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) and reasonably consistent direction and support from its Executive Board.³

Resource Management

How committed is UNICEF to robust efficiency targets?

Not known

What proportion of the budget is spent against the period to which it is allocated?

✓ UNICEF regularly meets or even exceeds its planned spend.^{6,8,9}

Year	Planned Spend	Actual Spend	% actual vs planned
2005	\$2131m	\$2213m	103.8
2004	\$1657m	\$1615m	97.5
2003	\$1376m	\$1469m	106.8

What proportion of total expenditure is spent on administration?

✓ The proportion of the support budget, compared to the use of total resources, has been decreasing. The Biennial Support Budget for 2006-7 projects a support budget of 16.2%, compared to 19% for 2004-5.¹⁰

✓ In 2005 the organisation managed almost 40% more income and expenditure, compared to 2004, while containing the increase in administration costs to 7%.¹¹

How clear and effective are the organisation's financial management procedures?

× Overall financial management remains weak. Furthermore, although the proportion of offices with satisfactory financial management ratings has improved (54% in 2006 against 44% the previous year) it is concerning that there appears to be a consistently low proportion of offices with satisfactory functioning of financial controls and reports.¹²

× The current finance and administration procedures are designed for development programmes and are difficult to apply in emergency contexts.⁷ Financial and administration systems have not been adapted for humanitarian response situations.¹⁸

How well is UNICEF's resource allocation criteria aligned with its corporate strategy and comparative advantage?

✓ In spite of the risks of instability due to its high level of dependence on non-regular contributions, UNICEF is managing to maintain a significant degree of coherence in its spending allocation.³

⇔ However, the high level of non-regular contributions does reduce UNICEF's ability to deliver

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outcomes it has committed to. For example, in the MTSP it was projected that HIV/AIDS expenditure as a share of the total programme would rise from 3% in 2000 to 14% by 2005. The actual figure in 2005 was 8%. Over the same period, the projection for spend on integrated early childhood development was that this would reduce from 33% to 27%. The actual share rose to 38% in 2005.¹⁷

✓ The target of allocating 60% of regular resources to the least developed countries (LDCs) was met in 2005.⁶

Staff Management

To what extent is staff recruitment, postings and promotions meritocratic and transparent?

✓ In almost all cases, posts are filled by competition, though top management can exercise some prerogative when there is a pressing business case. Around 400 internal vacancies are advertised every year. They are open to all staff and staff are matched to jobs according to their competencies, knowledge, experience, skills and qualifications.³

× A very low percentage of UNICEF emergency staff consider that UNICEF's approach to promotion is objective, fair and correct.⁷

Is there an agreed Human Resources strategy in support of UNICEF's strategic plan?

× Human Resources management was identified as the most common area of concern in UNICEF's MTSP 2002-5 mid-term review (in 2004); problems were identified in recruitment and deployment, technical competencies, staff "burn-out", and weaknesses in regional offices.²

× Human Resources planning for emergencies is weak and organisation-wide systems for surge capacity and mainstreaming have not progressed as fast as needed. The Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies and standards (SPHERE) for humanitarian response are not well known by UNICEF teams; this has serious implications for sector-based coordination.⁷ Additionally, UNICEF is challenged by how it fills the 'transition gap' between initial emergency deployment and permanent positions being identified and filled.¹⁸

⇔ Emergency Preparedness and Response Planning (EPRP) has been rolled out to more than 90% of UNICEF COs between 2000 and 2005. UNICEF established an Emergency Response Team to bolster specialist capacity in humanitarian response. The "Corporate Trigger" is a mechanism to increase HR emergency response to prioritise staff deployment in the first stages of an emergency. However, the organisational culture puts too great an emphasis on excellence while simpler and faster tools may be more effective in practice.²⁴

✓ UNICEF has initiated an independent review of how the organisation carries out its work. This will be informed and complemented by a series of other management reform initiatives which are also underway, including reviews and evaluations in the areas of human resources management, business processes, the supply function, partnerships with civil society, gender mainstreaming and resource mobilisation and advocacy in industrialised countries. The review will both identify areas where change is urgently needed and develop a coherent programme for the future development of organisational capacities.¹³

Operational Management

Is UNICEF sufficiently decentralised to enable it to respond flexibly to country demand?

✓ UNICEF has a strong focus on the country level, with 85% of its staff posted in the field. Significant discretion is given to field-based regional directors and country directors. Local knowledge is a strength. Operational guidance is generally robust.³

⇔ Regional offices are identified as a crossroad of much responsibility and increasing authority, but there are concerns that the RO has the right staff and resources to fulfil their accountabilities and how well they respond to functions.¹⁴

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How well is UNICEF managing its *PARTNERSHIPS*?

Summary UNICEF has a good record on enabling developing countries to both influence its strategic policy agenda and its country programmes. UNICEF aligns its strategies and programmes with national governments but it is not always aligned with government modalities and procedures. It is often perceived that UNICEF is not an active contributor to local harmonisation efforts amongst development agencies and that UNICEF's performance in coordinating its work with other UN agencies is mixed. Yet, good examples of coordinated responses to disasters and emergencies exist. UNICEF works well with local and non-governmental organisations, but beneficiaries require greater involvement. With increased importance on collaboration, UNICEF has created an Office for Public Partnerships. UNICEF is perceived as lacking good partnership behaviour by not seeking feedback on its behaviour from its partners, and not routinely sharing information with other donors (though greater emphasis is placed on local governments and civil society). UNICEF is seen to be reluctant to challenge governments on sensitive issues, which is a key part of their mandate as international lead on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF prefers quiet diplomacy to make unacceptable situations visible, and calls on governments and civil society to act, while offering its support as a partner in the process. In some countries UNICEF is playing a crucial convener/facilitator role in dialogue, consensus building and participation around goals related to the rights of children by a very broad and diverse range of national, social and political actors, in national budgetary and fiscal policies as they relate to the fulfilment of children's rights.

Voice

What mechanisms exist for developing countries to influence the strategy of UNICEF?

✓ As a UN organisation, UNICEF is organised on a 'one member, one vote' principle with representation drawn from developed and developing countries, on a regional basis. Developing countries form a majority of the board. UNICEF Executive Board meetings also include the participation/observation of non-governmental organisations, including UNICEF national committees, civil society organisations and other UN agencies.

✓ UNICEF country programming flows directly from the UNDAF and both documents are prepared in close consultation with the host government.

How actively is UNICEF promoting the participation of civil society?

× Perception of UNICEF's work in involving civil society in national policy dialogues is mixed across countries and in relation to sector, with UNICEF being seen to be particularly good with regard to NGOs but less well with the private sector.¹⁵

⇔ UNICEF does not always identify partners in the planning for effective and reliable humanitarian response.⁷

✓ UNICEF has broad networks and experience at district and local level, and its ability in building capacity on the ground is viewed as the organisation's great strength. UNICEF is also praised for its ability to cooperate with local and non-governmental organisations.²

⇔ In February 2006, UNICEF commissioned an external Review of Civil Society Partnerships (CSR) which examined UNICEF's strengths and weaknesses as a partner.²¹ Results are not yet in the public domain.

Partnership Behaviour

What mechanisms are in place to seek feedback on partnership behaviour and what do the results show?

× UNICEF does not systematically conduct partnership surveys or initiate peer reviews.³

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✓ UNICEF conducted a questionnaire survey to member states and National Committees as part of the Mid Term Review of the 2002-05 MTSP.²⁰

✓ A Peer Review exercise to assess the UNICEF evaluation function was initiated in September 2005 by the Evaluation Network of OECD/DAC.²¹ Key findings of the Peer Review of the UNICEF's evaluation function will focus on six main areas:

(a) National capacity-building and strengthened national leadership in country-level evaluations; (b) Strengthening evaluation within the United Nations system and with other partners; (c) Evaluation in humanitarian crises; (d) Evaluation related to MTSP focus areas, strategies and operational effectiveness; (e) Strengthening the organizational capacity of UNICEF in evaluation; (f) Heightened management attention to the evaluation function.²²

Alignment

To what extent does this organisation foster government ownership through the project/programme cycle?

⇔ UNICEF's promotion of government ownership is seen to vary across countries, although it has been improving in recent years.¹⁵

What % aid flows to government sector is reported on national partner budgets?

Not available

What % of TC flows are provided through coordinated programmes consistent with partners' national strategies?

Not available

Does UNICEF use countries' own public financial management and procurement systems?

× UNICEF's alignment with government modalities and procedures, with the exception of participation in some sector-wide approaches, is perceived as limited.¹⁵

Is the number of Project Implementation Units decreasing or non-existent?

Not applicable.

In what ways has UNICEF been aligning its strategy/programme/projects with national strategies?

✓ UNICEF is seen to have taken steps to align its own country programmes, sector strategies and operational activities with national priorities and strategies.¹⁵

How willing is UNICEF to challenge governments on difficult/controversial issues?

× UNICEF is seen to be reluctant to engage in critical policy dialogue on sensitive issues, and UNICEF policies/models are not always adapted to the local context.¹⁵

⇔ It is not clear whether current staffing levels are adequate to fulfil the advocacy role in areas such as Children in Affected by Armed Conflict.⁷

Beneficiaries

How effective is UNICEF at assessing needs of beneficiaries and feeding beneficiary voice back into programme planning through monitoring, reviews and evaluation?

⇔ Tsunami affected population did express concerns about the lack of information and consultation. UNICEF needs to increase affected communities' involvement in setting priorities, design of programmes and monitoring of implementation.¹⁸

Harmonisation

To what extent does UNICEF participate in local donor coordination activities such as sector working groups/thematic groups?

⇔ Although UNICEF is not perceived as an active contributor to local harmonisation efforts amongst development agencies, there are good examples of co-ordinated responses to crisis situations.¹⁵

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To what extent does UNICEF share information with other donors?

⇔ UNICEF is perceived to be a rather poor performer in terms of sharing information with other development agencies although greater emphasis is placed on sharing information with local governments and civil society.¹⁵

What evidence is there of harmonising procurement and consulting services procedures, disbursement policies and evaluation practices?

✓ UNICEF is a member of the UN Evaluations Group and the Inter-Agency Procurement Working Group.

Information not available to answer the rest of this question.

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What do we know about UNICEF's COUNTRY/GLOBAL RESULTS?

Summary At the global level UNICEF's unique role in advocacy around children's rights has raised political commitment and the resources to protect and promote children's rights. Significant progress has been made, in partnership with others, in significantly decreasing measles mortality, the near global eradication of polio, and in ensuring increased political and financial priority and commitment for children affected by HIV and AIDS. At the country level, results appear impressive but since reporting does not yet routinely provide contextual analysis, it is difficult to understand the true value or impact of UNICEF's efforts. UNICEF is valued as an advocate for children's rights, with neutrality and technical competence to work well with national governments. Improved partnerships, including harmonisation and integration with the UN family and beyond, would further strengthen UNICEF's results and contributions to the MDGs.

Country/Global Results

What information is available on UNICEF's performance at country level?

× UNICEF's full annual country reports and country evaluation reports are not made available to the Executive Board.

What evidence is there of the independence, credibility and utility of UNICEF's own evaluations?

✓ A peer assessment was completed of UNICEF's evaluation function in 2006, and recommendations are now being taken forward. The assessment found that the evaluation office demonstrates a high degree of independence and professional credibility and its contribution to management and decision making for both programmes and policies is strong, timely and useful.¹³

⇔ Recommendations of evaluations and reviews are not always analysed and implementation plans developed. As a result, recommendations from previous evaluations reappear the following year.⁷

✓ The MTSP 2006-09 includes a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for management responses to major evaluations.⁵

What results is UNICEF having at the country level?

✓ UNICEF is perceived to have a strong comparative advantage in advocacy, provide good quality technical advice, and is seen to be relatively effective in capacity building of public institutions but with mixed performance in relation to civil society.¹⁵

UNICEF operates in 156 countries and is involved in a large number of initiatives.⁶ Examples of results include:

✓ In **West Africa**:

- The Accelerated Child Survival and Development (ACSD) Programme, implemented in eleven West and Central African states has had a dramatic impact, reducing under-5 mortality by between 10% and 20% in districts in these countries (covering approximately 17 million people), preventing an estimated 18,000 child deaths a year.

✓ In **Sierra Leone**:

- Reunification and successful reintegration of more than 5,400 former child soldiers completed by December 2005
- Adolescent knowledge of HIV increased from 8% in 2001 to 40% in 2005.

✓ In **Bolivia**:

- Since 2003, primary school completion rates have increased by 13%
- The government has ratified the two optional protocols on the Rights of the Child, passed a law guaranteeing free birth certificates to children and provided certificates to over 500,000 children and 30,000 adults.

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✓ In **Botswana:**

- Prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission (PMTCT) was rolled out and uptake increased from 36% in 2003 to 73% in 2005.
- Testing of pregnant mothers increased from 46% in 2002 to 60% in 2003.

✓ In **Burkina Faso:**

- The incidence of female genital mutilation/cutting was found to have decreased from 66% in 1996 to 40% in 2005.

✓ In **India:**

- Significant progress towards the eradication of polio, including a reduction in the number of cases of wild polio virus from 1600 cases in 159 districts in 2002 to 45 cases in 26 districts in 2005.¹⁶
- In four states a school-quality programme for disadvantaged children reduced the number of out-of-school children from 958,000 in 2001 to 162,100 in 2005.

✓ During the **South East Asia Earthquake:**

- Over 500,000 people were provided with safe drinking water and more than 57,000 children resumed learning.

✓ In **Darfur:**

- Crude mortality figures were reduced from 2 in 10,000 in 2004 to 0.8 per 10,000 in 2005. Acute malnutrition among children was reduced from 21.8% to 11.9% over the same period.

What results is UNICEF having at the global level?

✓ UNICEF is providing leadership, within the UN family, on accelerating work and increasing focus on orphans and other children made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS. UNICEF is working with governments and partners to develop national plans of action. 20 African countries have adopted strategies to ensure the protection and care of OVCs; while many Asian and Latin American countries are conducting assessments which will lead to the development of national plans. In 2005 UNICEF and UNAIDS launched a major international campaign "Unite for Children, Unite against AIDS" to raise \$1bn for children affected by HIV/AIDS by 2010.

✓ UNICEF has made impressive contributions to high level advocacy in recent years that have created the drive for resolutions in the Security Council and General Assembly on Children in Armed Conflict. In some countries, UNICEF has driven the agenda for the rights of children in armed conflict, especially notable being the Action Plan for Children in Sri Lanka.⁷

✓ As of January 2006, 121 countries have signed the optional protocol of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and 114 had signed the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. This was up from 16 countries each in 2001.⁶

✓ The Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the rights of women in Africa, which prohibits Female Genital Mutilation, entered into force in November 2005.⁶

✓ The number of Polio epidemic countries has been reduced to four and the number of countries reporting active transmission of imported polio down from 21 to 7.⁶

✓ UNICEF and partners launched the Measles Initiative in 2001 to support government's efforts to tackle measles deaths. Global measles mortality declined from an estimated 873,000 deaths in 1999 to 345,000 in 2005. In Africa progress has been greater with measles deaths falling by 75 per cent from an estimated 506,000 to 126,000. The Initiative is on track to see a 90% reduction in measles deaths globally by 2010 compared to 2000 estimates.¹⁹

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Portfolio Quality

What is the % of projects/programmes which met their targets?

Not available

How does this vary across sectors, regions and countries?

Not available

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Background This fact sheet is designed to summarise information available on the effectiveness of UNICEF. It collates the latest published information in four key areas from a variety of sources including the Multilateral Effectiveness Framework (MEFF) ³, the Multilateral Organisations Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) ¹⁵ as well as a range of UNICEF's own Annual Reporting ⁵⁻¹⁶ and assesses areas of strength (✓) and weakness (✗) and where progress is mixed (↔).

***Disclaimer:** This Effectiveness Summary is a tool designed to simply present the latest available information on UNICEF's effectiveness. It is one of many prepared by DFID covering a range of multilaterals. The summaries will inform policy but are only one of a range of criteria and sources of evidence considered in recommending future DFID funding allocations. The balanced scorecard format organises what we believe to be the objective sources of information available on four aspects of each organisation's internal effectiveness. It does not measure actual development results on the ground or the merits of the organisation's development objectives. The text within each summary box provides a short analysis of what we believe this information tells us. Any unreferenced text is DFID analysis not in the public domain. It should be noted that the amount of information available and the quality and reliability of information varies considerably across organisations, so there is a limit to which the summaries will be used for comparative purposes.