



## Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited  
28 March 2001

Original: English

**For information**

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### United Nations Children's Fund

Executive Board

**Annual session 2001**

4-8 June 2001

Item 4 of the provisional agenda\*

### **Summary of mid-term reviews and major evaluations of country programmes**

#### **Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States region**

#### *Summary*

The present report was prepared in response to Executive Board decision 1995/8 (E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1), which requested the secretariat to submit to the Board a summary of the outcome of mid-term reviews (MTRs) and major country programme evaluations, specifying, inter alia, the results achieved, lessons learned and the need for any adjustments in the country programme. The Board is to comment on the reports and provide guidance to the secretariat, if necessary. The MTRs and evaluations described in the present report were conducted during 2000.

### **Introduction**

1. In 2000, none of the country programmes in the region conducted a mid-term review (MTR). However, the year was rich with opportunities for the improvement of data through major global monitoring exercises: Education for All (EFA), which was reported on in the previous MTR and evaluation paper (E/ICEF/2000/P/L.26) since the exercise started in 1999 and extended into 2000; and the End-Decade Assessment of the World Summit for Children goals.

2. Most countries in the region (excluding Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Turkmenistan) submitted reports on the End-Decade Assessment of the

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\* E/ICEF/2001/7.



World Summit for Children. The reporting process not only updated data based on the 26 indicators chosen to measure progress, but also fostered closer and more transparent evaluative relationships among various ministries and institutes within the countries that worked on the assessment as well as among supporting United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil society organizations. As a way to fill data gaps, the following 10 countries conducted multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS): Albania; Armenia; Azerbaijan; Bosnia and Herzegovina; the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia; Georgia; the Republic of Moldova; Tajikistan; Ukraine; and Uzbekistan. Some of the results of the MICS indicated particularly alarming trends that will inform programme direction and determine research, monitoring and evaluation plans in the future. As part of the MICS process, the Regional Office, with headquarters' support, conducted three intensive one-week workshops to build capacity within the participating ministries and institutes in sampling and survey methodology, data processing, data analysis and reporting.

3. Several important evaluations of UNICEF interventions were conducted during 2000, all of which focus on programmes or projects that have been implemented over at least a three-year period.

4. The region saw the first end-of-cycle programme assessment in Turkey as the 1997-2000 country programme ended. Future end-of-cycle programme evaluations are now being actively encouraged, and most integrated monitoring and evaluation plans (IMEPs) that have been designed this past year include plans for such an assessment. Turkey's initial efforts in this area are important. As the region's first attempt to conduct an assessment of a full programme cycle, this has now set a precedent for other programmes. If it had not been for the earthquake that hit Turkey, the assessment was planned to be an actual end-of-cycle programme evaluation.

5. Another evaluation highlighted is the family education programme in Romania. The programme began in 1991 and has been implemented through three programme cycles. The evaluation not only gave concrete programme directions, but also served as a springboard for more in-depth discussion among experts and those participating in the evaluation in an excellent post-evaluation feedback workshop.

6. The Aral Sea Project for Environmental and Regional Assistance (ASPERA) was established in 1995. The programme's multisectoral approach covered provinces that were nearest the Aral Sea in the three countries affected — Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

7. The global education project in Albania has been implemented for three years, and the evaluation showed that the project has had positive impacts on both student performance and teacher satisfaction. The methodology and results of this evaluation will be a good resource for other education programmes that are primarily concerned with the process of education.

8. The seventh Regional Monitoring Report produced by the MONEE (Monitoring of Eastern Europe) project at the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, "Young People in Changing Societies", focuses on the situation of the region's 65 million young people aged 15-24 years — the "transition generation".

## Major country programme evaluations

### The rapid assessment of the Government of Turkey/UNICEF country programme (1997-2000)

9. The UNICEF Office in Turkey contracted an external consultant to conduct an internal rapid assessment of the 1997-2000 Government of Turkey/UNICEF country programme of cooperation in June and July 2000. The study covered the following programme components which were designed to support the goals and objectives of the Convention on the Rights of Children, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the National Programme of Action (NPA) of Turkey:

- (a) Civil society mobilization (support for community and NGO participation);
- (b) Support for regional and intra-urban disparity reduction;
- (c) Social research and monitoring;
- (d) Planning and policy development.

10. In response to the two major earthquakes in Turkey in 1999, UNICEF launched the Recovery Plan for Turkish Children (RPTC), which is included in the assessment, owing to the coverage (200,000 families) and the value (\$15.5 million). The study was designed to assess the effectiveness of the programme design and strategies so that changes could be made in the upcoming programme cycle.

11. The assessment was based on the annual reports, the MTR, research studies undertaken from 1997 to 2000, statistical reports on Turkey and situation reports. The country programme's performance was assessed based on qualitative norms such as relevance, adequacy, participatory approaches, support to decentralization, capability to adjust to needs of the women and children that might emerge during the course of the programme, and other essential requirements for promoting the goals of the two Conventions. Although the exercise was meant to be a much more comprehensive programme evaluation, because of the emergency caused by the earthquake, the assessment took the form of a desk study and counterpart consultations.

12. The findings of the evaluation showed that there is relevance in the goals and objectives of the programme adopted from the NPA and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The objectives were considered feasible and respond adequately to the needs of the beneficiaries with support projects for primary health care (PHC), nutrition, education, etc., including area-based solutions to the spatial dimension of these problems. It is still felt, however, that there is a need to clarify objectives at the country programme preparation stage so that a more accurate account can be made of the success or shortfalls of the programme.

13. The formulation of the four programme areas to address the problems, however, posed difficulties in attribution, i.e., establishing a direct causal linkage between these areas and the objectives.

14. The evaluation found that the advocacy campaigns launched to raise awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to develop strategic partnerships with both Government and civil society in complementary roles were successful.

The cumulative advocacy efforts of UNICEF, the media and civil society through the years resulted, during the period, in a demonstration of government political will with the adoption of child-related policies and the enactment of related legislation.

15. The country programme adapted to the situation of diminishing government expenditures in the social sector by adopting measures that would allow the community to assume a greater role. This included: (a) giving more emphasis to village-level interventions, e.g. PHC and referral system, which better attends to the people's needs in a more cost-effective way; (b) adopting more intersectoral collaborations and partnerships with community leaders and volunteers in the delivery of social services; and (c) reviving participatory practices inherent in the people's culture, e.g., *imece*, or voluntary labour contributions by the community.

16. The programme's research agenda contained mostly baseline studies for the design of pilot projects. The information will now be consolidated and used to establish the socio-economic and demographic profiles of the at-risk groups and identify them at the household level for the purpose of programme targeting. The Geographic Information System (GIS) used for the earthquake areas is an appropriate tool and will be used for this purpose.

17. So far support to the decentralization process has been limited to providing practical examples of area-based pilot projects in the provinces that demonstrated local management and implementation of intersectoral programmes. The area-based programme provided important lessons: (a) the provincial and district levels are natural places for integrating and facilitating intersectoral interventions; (b) local governments readily accept social indicators on the quality of life as a development agenda after undertaking a situation analysis supported by research; and (c) the people's culture and social support systems can be rich sources of methods for mobilizing community involvement, project cost-sharing and co-ownership, and for ensuring sustainability of project investments. Support to decentralization in Turkey will have to be made more relevant by including inputs to the discussion of financing issues, especially for resource poor areas where quality of life indicators are the lowest.

18. There were major additions to the work programme as a result of two powerful earthquakes that hit Turkey in 1999. The RPTC provided UNICEF in Turkey with a wealth of experience in implementing a major emergency programme. The experience brought new programme innovations, such as psychosocial intervention and practical implementation of the child-friendly environment concept, new collaborations, new technologies and new programme resources that could be adopted in the next country programme.

19. The assessment suggested greater continuity in the proven strategies and adoption of the lessons and innovations experienced in the next programme cycle. The regular programme demonstrated the following interventions and strategies that have proven to be effective in Turkey and will be continued in the next programme:

- (a) Advocacy and social mobilization (especially in the initial phase of the programme);
- (b) Relevant information infrastructure for public attention;
- (c) Capacity-building for implementation partners (both local and national levels);

(d) Intersectoral approach to the delivery of services such as the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness, PHC and the referral system, integrated early childhood care and development (ECCD)/mothers' training, crèches and youth centres, etc., that have been cost-effective;

(e) Empowerment and participation that enable community volunteers and families to take responsibility for the pursuit of their own welfare, including the adoption of new patterns of behaviour and initiating demands for services. Towards this end, culturally relevant social support systems will be tapped to enhance the participation process, thus ensuring sustainability and cost-effectiveness;

(f) Area-based (provincial and district levels) entry and management of programmes to allow optimum coverage/utilization of interventions per spatial concentration of the at-risk population and for implementation effectiveness and efficiency resulting from greater (local) accountability and supervision.

20. UNICEF in Turkey will adopt the innovations experienced in the past cycle such as psychosocial support, the child-friendly environment concept and the integrated delivery of services. These will be "packaged" under a disaster and emergency preparedness project for adoption by the country's provincial administrations as part of disaster preparedness measures. Moreover, the new collaborations established with local universities, volunteer organizations and international relief agencies, as well as with new donors of programme resources; will be maintained. The use of new technologies, such as the Child Information Network in Turkey web site and GIS, will also be sustained for advocacy and policy and programme development. The development of a monitoring and evaluation system for purposes of programme implementation, management and documentation will be assured in the next programme cycle. The documentation of programme processes, practices and costs will be useful for advocating the wider replication of innovative interventions.

### **Evaluation of the family education programme (Romania)**

21. UNICEF began work in Romania in 1991 and is now embarking on its third programme cycle (2000-2004). It has taken on a large task, working at different fronts to deal with the issues of early childhood education, parent education, community development, education for Roma communities, HIV/AIDS and the training of "agents of change".

22. The past programme cycle (1995-1999) of the five-year family education project was an extension of a previous ECCD project (1991-1994) intended to reach more counties and now targeted at strengthening the family through education and training of various levels of care providers and others related to child-care policies and programmes. The project involved various partners, including the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, mayors, other local authorities, NGOs, churches, educators, nurses, social workers and parents. The project activities focused particularly on the training of change agents (basically kindergarten directors, teachers, school inspectors, social workers, nurses, mayors, etc.) in early childhood programme development and implementation, parent education, education for health and community development.

23. The evaluation pointed to certain strengths of the programme strategies: (a) the selection of key government and non-government agencies and key persons as partners in the programme; (b) the use of training of trainers to create a multiplier effect; and (c) a good choice of NGO partners to complement the work of the project. Integrating programme components into the existing system enabled going to scale and ensured sustainability.

24. There were also areas of concern: (a) the need for clearer goals; (b) the lack of standard evaluation and monitoring instruments; (c) understaffing of the project; (d) neglect of crèches; and (e) the minimal impact of the project on Roma children.

25. The evaluation articulated several lessons learned during the implementation of the project. The leadership in the community and the presence of a few related projects determine the success of the programme. In addition, unless the basic needs of food and clothing are met, children from poor communities have limited interest in schooling. Another lesson learned is that training various child-care experts does not ensure that they will be retained in the system. Many staff, after taking advantage of the training, moved on to other projects or professions.

26. During the next programme cycle, the project will focus on two main areas: ECCD, encompassing pre-school education, parent education and child participation; and community development for the strengthening of families, comprising capacity-building for agents of change, and Roma community education and development.

27. The team felt that an evaluation of such an extensive and varied programme after five years of implementation required at least three weeks of actual travel within the country to actually monitor programme activities and interview counterparts, and several weeks afterwards to write up and edit the results.

28. Upon completion, the evaluation was used as part of a review meeting bringing together those who participated in the evaluation as well as policy officials responsible for child-care and education policies. The participatory use of the evaluation as the forum for discussion in a very inclusive meeting was very positive and offers a model to other countries in the region.

### **The evaluation of the Aral Sea Project for Environmental and Regional Assistance (area-based project involving Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan)**

29. ASPERA was set up in 1995 to address the situation of women and children living in the areas affected by the Aral Sea crisis. It covered the provinces nearest to the Aral Sea in each of the three countries affected — Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The programme had five components: maternal health; child health, including control of diarrhoeal diseases (CDD) and acute respiratory infections (ARI); nutrition, including breastfeeding, anaemia and iodine deficiency; basic education; and water and sanitation.

30. It was decided to evaluate ASPERA in 2000 to provide input into the new programme for 2000-2004. The evaluation was based on a desk review of available documents, materials and statistics; and discussions with the various involved

UNICEF offices, local government officials, health staff, school directors, NGOs and other partners in the three countries. The major findings were:

(a) Of the original objectives, those in the areas of immunization, CDD and breastfeeding were achieved with a clear contribution from UNICEF. The factors contributing to success were adequate financial and human resources, political support, clear goals and objectives, good social communication and mobilization, and good use of information for monitoring;

(b) Most of the other original objectives related to ARI, maternal health, iron deficiency anaemia, iodine deficiency, basic education, and water and sanitation were not achieved. This failure was due both to unrealistic or unclear objectives, and — in the education and water and sanitation sectors — a lack of human and financial resources;

(c) The cross-sectoral, cross-country approach to project management was reduced in practice to a multisectoral, multi-country approach;

(d) The programme contributed to capacity-building at the local level and reached its target groups in immunization, CDD, control of infant and child mortality, promotion of breastfeeding and, to a limited extent, in maternal mortality and control of anaemia in children and women;

(e) The management structure was not adequate to the tasks. Equally, the current coordination between UNICEF, Government, NGOs and other international partners needs to be improved;

(f) The performance in raising donor contributions was well below the planned levels.

31. Many of the recommendations from the evaluation have been incorporated into the new programme, and further studies will be done on ARI and anaemia prevention and control. The evaluation also revealed a potential nutritional crisis in Uzbekistan, and a mid-upper arm circumference study was conducted in November. The uncompleted work in ARI, maternal health, iron deficiency anaemia, iodine deficiency, basic education, hygiene, and water and sanitation forms part of the new programme of cooperation for 2000-2004. This programme incorporates cross-sectoral projects such as ECCD. The planning process has tried to ensure that objectives are clear, realistic and measurable. Efforts are also being made to further increase community-level participation in planning, implementation and monitoring, but this varies from country to country and project to project.

32. The political process of nation-building among the three States makes it difficult to forecast how effective such inter-country work may be in the future. While many of the issues are common to the three countries, the problems of the Aral Sea have been subject to differing responses. In the short term, however, many programme interventions are managed with the participation of the technical staff from the three Governments.

### **Evaluation of the global education project (Albania)**

33. The global education project began in 1997, and the preparatory period and two phases of the programme were completed by June 2000. The first phase incorporated six schools in the project, the second incorporated 10. The Albanian

Ministry of Education's Institute for Pedagogical Studies, and the International Institute for Global Education, University of Toronto, were partners with UNICEF in this project. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the impact of the project on classrooms that adopted the approach and recommendations to go further to scale.

34. The evaluation included a review and assessment of an internal evaluation conducted on phase one of the project as well as an assessment of phase two. The methodology for the research was primarily qualitative analysis.

35. The purpose of the global education curriculum is to combine a group process teaching methodology with a philosophy of education that involves the pupil in his/her own learning and promotes a systemic view of learning. In Albania, the project has been implemented by developing "activities" that can be conducted during one class period. These activities are designed to meet the objectives of the curricula in math, knowledge of nature, Albanian language, civic education and history/geography. The activities not only address a specific subject's objectives, e.g. parts of speech in language, but also provide pupils with the opportunity to engage in dialogue about broader topics such as the environment or health. Through pedagogic exercises, the students are encouraged to apply their learning in the "real" world.

36. The findings of the evaluation show that after three years, the project is having a positive impact on the participating pupils and other stakeholders. Some of the findings are as follows:

(a) There was evidence of qualitative change in areas such as class participation, improved problem-solving skills, increased tolerance for difference and improved self-esteem, and anecdotal evidence of improved academic performance;

(b) Academically weaker pupils increased their class participation and their learning of subject objectives;

(c) Pupils were participating in school and community improvement activities and reported that relationships with other family members were improving;

(d) Teachers expressed a high degree of satisfaction and comfort with the group process methods of teaching. They described their role as that of a facilitator and co-learner and not as a lecturer simply imparting information;

(e) Teachers found the global education project more time-consuming than the more traditional model of the past, but all reported that this method is much more effective in keeping pupils engaged in the learning process;

(f) A core team developed activities, and teachers implemented them as developed. Some teachers were comfortable with tailoring the activities, but further integration is needed for teachers to build the capacity for developing their own activities;

(g) The training was considered very effective in laying the groundwork for the success of this project. All stakeholders expressed the desire for more advanced training and a training of trainers model to be implemented;

(h) Resources for the activities were somewhat adequate and teachers, pupils and students were resourceful in finding them. However, all expressed the need for more technological and reference resources to ensure continued improvement of the project;

(i) The principals, education district directors, the Ministry of Education and the Institute for Pedagogical Studies all strongly supported the implementation of the project. Principals and district directors were promoting in-service training within their regions, and the Institute provided time for their staff on the core team to develop the activities and provide support to teachers who were implementing the project;

(j) The project appeared to strengthen the curriculum reform effort in the Albanian education system;

(k) School and community relations appeared to improve as a result of the project.

37. The evaluation pointed out that the project will require some form of outside financial support for a moderate period of time due to the current fragility of the Albanian education system. The project cannot be looked at as a “quick fix”. One of the central premises of the global education curriculum requires both a broad and a deep penetration in the education system.

38. As the ultimate beneficiary of this change effort, the pupils affected are already showing strong evidence of obtaining the changes and meeting the objectives sought by this project. There is a momentum now in the Albanian education system that needs some continued support for a reasonably longer period of time. There is already a momentum building towards the teachers, pupils and parents pushing for this change from the system that would require the complete infusion of the global education project throughout the system. Ultimately, it will be very cost-effective for UNICEF to continue as a partner and facilitator until Albanians can reach a critical mass in the Albanian education system that supports total ownership of the project.

39. As a result of the evaluation, several programme directions have been taken in 2001 which include the addition of a pre-service teacher-training project with the pedagogical universities, an expansion of the project in the lower grades 1 to 4, and the addition of new schools.

### **Young People in Changing Societies (MONEE Project/Innocenti Research Centre)**

40. This year’s MONEE Report focuses on the situation of the region’s 65 million young people aged 15-24 years (1999). This is the first generation since the collapse of communism to leave school, look for jobs and make decisions about raising families. As such, this generation is putting the reforms of the last decade to the test.

41. Of the total youth population, 26 million (41 per cent) were in education, 21 million (32 per cent) were employed and 18 million (27 per cent) were neither in education nor in employment. The members of this generation are often portrayed as the natural winners of the transition, receptive to new ideas and able to adjust to the new conditions. However, they are also pioneers in these reborn societies. This role

places them in a pivotal position — the transition presents particular hazards as well as particular opportunities for them.

42. The report not only highlights the challenges that this generation faces, it also goes on to see the transition generation as an immense asset to the region in this time of rapid economic and social transformation. It goes beyond the notion that youth are passive recipients of products, services and values, and calls for youth-friendly policies that would benefit families, communities and societies as well as young people themselves. Two concepts underpin such strategies: the recognition of young people as a distinct population group with its own needs; and the participation of youth, including a meaningful dialogue with young people that would make a genuine contribution to policy responses.

## **Conclusion**

43. Countries that are preparing their country programme recommendations and master plans of operation this year have begun to design IMEPs. Although there have been attempts in the past to design IMEPs, there has been a lack of clarity about its purpose which, in turn, resulted in its underutilization as a management tool. This is changing now as programme staff have become more familiar with the concept and the benefits of such a forward looking plan, and this will no doubt add to the improvement of evaluations in the future.

44. The increased capacity of collecting and analysing data that was fostered by the global monitoring exercises (EFA and End-Decade Review) and the trainings developed as part of the MICS exercise will no doubt provide better baseline data that will improve subsequent evaluations. There is still a need to follow up and continue building upon the skills of counterparts and programme officers who participated in the MICS trainings.

45. As programme structures move from the traditional sectoral approach to an integrated, rights-based approach, programme evaluations will become more important for accountability. In future, there will be greater emphasis on monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme framework itself and the strategies used to achieve results.

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