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Report on the implementation of the strategic framework for partnerships and collaborative relationships

Summary

UNICEF is strongly committed to partnerships with relevant actors as a means to achieve results. This paper, requested by the Executive Board in decision 2009/9, reviews and expands the UNICEF strategic framework for partnerships and collaborative relationships (E/ICEF/2009/10), taking into account lessons learned since 2009.

The expanded framework for partnerships aims to reinforce the centrality of effective partnerships in UNICEF-supported efforts to scale up innovative programmes and advocacy for children's rights. This paper highlights new opportunities and challenges for partnerships, and the way forward in addressing them.

The expanded framework proposes three priority approaches to enhance UNICEF performance in partnerships: (a) framing the contribution of partnerships to results; (b) investing strategically in key multi-stakeholder partnerships; and (c) strengthening UNICEF capacity for effective partnering.

* E/ICEF/2012/15.



Introduction

1. Partnerships are at the heart of the UNICEF mandate. Today's complex global challenges require partnerships across sectors and societies to achieve equitable and sustainable results for children and realize the promise of a World Fit for Children.¹ The United Nations General Assembly defines partnerships as "voluntary and collaborative relationships between various parties, both public and non-public, in which all participants agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and, as mutually agreed, to share risks and responsibilities, resources and benefits".² They are distinct from commercial contractual arrangements regulating the delivery of services or the provision of goods.

2. The organization's role as a facilitator of and contributor to effective partnerships, as outlined in the UNICEF strategic framework for partnerships and collaborative relationships adopted by the Executive Board in 2009, remains pertinent, especially in the context of its equity-based approach and humanitarian action. However, this capacity cannot be taken for granted; a dynamic approach to partnerships is essential to address the challenges of an evolving development and partner landscape.

3. The rise of middle-income countries has given renewed impetus to South-South cooperation as an effective partnership modality in development. South-South cooperation is an opportunity to advance children's issues; UNICEF is well placed to support knowledge sharing among countries, promote the involvement of civil society, and encourage partnerships with traditional donors in multifaceted cooperation arrangements.

4. The rising prominence of influential actors, including political groupings (such as the G20), regional organizations, civil society organizations, philanthropic foundations and the growing engagement of the corporate sector in the development agenda, have diversified the global partnership landscape. This has diversified the channels for development assistance. In line with these trends, the Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, Republic of Korea, in 2011, resulted in the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. The outcome is broader and more inclusive than ever before: it unites both traditional and new partners in development, and embraces new forms of cooperation.

5. The partnership landscape is characterized by networks of actors coming together to address specific development challenges. Such multi-stakeholder partnerships take various forms, ranging from broad coalitions to formalized partnerships, and use innovative approaches to access goods and services, pool resources and knowledge, establish policy frameworks and coordinate actions to create transformational results. For instance, public health experts attribute the continuing decline in under-five mortality to the increased use of key health

¹ "A world fit for children" was the title of the resolution (S-27/2) and outcome document adopted by the General Assembly on 10 May 2002 at its 27th Special Session, the first devoted exclusively to children. It was reconfirmed in the Declaration of the commemorative high-level plenary meeting devoted to the follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children, adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 62/88 of 13 December 2007.

² See "Towards global partnerships", General Assembly resolution 66/223, adopted on 22 December 2011. Originally endorsed by the General Assembly in 2000, this definition has been reaffirmed every two years since 2001.

interventions, many of which have been scaled-up through multi-actor initiatives. Innovative financing for development mechanisms involving a mix of actors have grown significantly during the last ten years. These multi-stakeholder partnerships are emerging as visible and legitimate actors in development, with established governance structures, resources, technical capacity and political influence. The rise of these new actors challenges the role of the traditional multilateral development cooperation system.

6. Partnerships are core to the United Nations agenda. Harnessing the full power of partnerships across the range of United Nations system activities is a key priority for the Secretary-General, as announced in his five-year action plan in 2012. Major thematic initiatives, such as Sustainable Energy for All and Every Woman Every Child, involving new actors, have become key mechanisms to advance societal progress. The discussion of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) emphasizes the need for the United Nations system to find innovative ways of developing and institutionalizing new partnerships with the private sector, civil society and regional organizations.

7. Globalized communication and the spread of social media has increased UNICEF opportunities to reach wider audiences, strengthen the organization's role in knowledge sharing, as well as advocacy efforts at national and global levels. This trend has also presented opportunities for innovative partnerships to promote solutions for children's issues, such as the use of mobile phones to collect real-time data on health and nutrition, and to strengthen protective elements of the online environment.

I. The partnership landscape

8. UNICEF partnerships have become increasingly multifaceted, differing across key dimensions, including level of formality, number of stakeholders, type of mutual engagement (from consultation to coordination to collaboration), geographic reach and, most importantly, in objectives and impact.

9. While the 2009 strategic framework highlighted five categories of partners, the expanded framework establishes a more inclusive categorization of key partners, recognizing UNICEF partnerships with governments as primary partners, and recognizing the broader engagement with other entities of the United Nations, multilateral organizations and the National Committees for UNICEF, in addition to civil society organizations (CSOs), global programme partnerships (GPPs), the corporate sector, knowledge and research, and in media and communication. These categories are not mutually exclusive, as some elements overlap or defy simple categorization.

10. As an intergovernmental organization, UNICEF is governed by United Nations Member States through the Executive Board, which provides overall policy direction and approves country programmes of cooperation. Governments provide overall direction to the United Nations system, including through the QCPR resolution of the General Assembly and other intergovernmental processes. At the country level, partnerships with host governments guide UNICEF and partners, including United Nations country teams, in the design, implementation, and evaluation of programmes.

11. Within the United Nations family, UNICEF has a special relationship with the Committee on the Rights of the Child as it monitors progress on children's rights. It also collaborates closely with other United Nations entities, such as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children, as well as other human rights monitoring bodies.

12. In addition, as part of the equity approach, UNICEF is increasingly engaging with partners at subnational and community levels while also seeking upstream influence in order to scale up action to achieve significant results for children. Engaging communities and other local actors, such as small-scale private providers, is vital in the provision of services to the most disadvantaged and excluded children. Similarly, as innovation gains in importance, UNICEF is developing partnerships with new actors in the technology, media and design industries. In humanitarian contexts, the growing focus on resilience and disaster risk reduction implies building new partnerships across traditional dividing lines between private sector and humanitarian actors.

II. Progress in partnerships since 2009

13. The 2009 strategic framework paved the way for a more coherent approach to partnering, including inter-organizational coordination, capacity building, performance management, monitoring and evaluation, and communication. While this work is ongoing and evolving, key progress against the recommendations of the 2009 framework and the broader partner landscape is outlined below.

Improved UNICEF capacity for partnering

14. Since 2009, UNICEF has introduced five main organizational changes to enhance partnering capacity. First, UNICEF has taken steps to reduce the administrative burden of partnerships, particularly with CSOs. The Programme Cooperation Agreement and the guidelines for partnerships with CSOs were revised to highlight the partnership arrangements with CSOs and simplify the internal processes seen as major bottlenecks. These internal processes related to vetting potential partners, preparing and agreeing on the programme document, as well as reviewing and approving the partnership agreement by the organization and transferring resources. In addition, as part of the organizational commitment to streamline procedures for emergencies, simplified operating procedures for UNICEF response to major emergencies were promulgated in 2012. These simplified procedures contain a significant number of revised processes to develop and launch a Programme Cooperation Agreement in the shortest possible time. UNICEF regularly consults with CSO partners to identify ways to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of partnerships.

15. Second, UNICEF continues to develop and refine tools and guidance for the development and management of partnerships. The Programme Policy and Procedures manual was updated to include a section on partnerships and integrate guidance on partnerships in different stages of programme planning and implementation cycles. The organization also developed new or revised guidance for more selective engagement in GPPs, the management of partnerships with CSOs, United Nations agencies, international financial institutions and the corporate sector,

as well as guidance on leveraging partnerships for advocacy, equity and innovation. It adopted a risk management policy that provides guidance for all operations, including partnerships.

16. Third, UNICEF has taken steps to enhance human resources capacity for effective partnering. A partnership skills training course was piloted in 2011. The organization also reviewed its human resources management procedures, including job descriptions and the competency framework, to include competencies and skills for effective partnering.

17. Fourth, UNICEF is strengthening its knowledge base and improving information management for partnerships. Country-level partnerships with a broad range of development actors are now tracked through the Enterprise Resource Planning system, known as VISION.³ Knowledge management has been enhanced, including resources and tools, good practices and lessons learned in partnering. These actions will help improve data analysis and information management as well as promote better partnering practice.

18. Lastly, UNICEF has increased its emphasis on partnerships in its external communication. Its new public communication and advocacy strategy highlights the importance of partnerships for achieving results for children. The organization advocates the value of partnerships, and promotes its work with partners through the UNICEF website and in reports, publications, media and communication materials as well as key speeches and statements.

Improved monitoring and evaluation of partnerships

19. UNICEF has conducted an extensive literature review to identify tools, methodologies and good practices for monitoring and evaluating partnerships. On this basis, the organization is strengthening programming, monitoring and evaluation approaches. It has begun to measure its performance in partnerships, and works closely with national partners to strengthen monitoring and evaluation of partnerships as a key programme strategy. Since 2010, country offices complete a self-assessment of their performance in managing partnerships as part of the annual review and reporting process. All country offices report on their performance against six global performance benchmarks related to partnerships.⁴ Based on the outcome of this review, country offices then take action to enhance effectiveness. For 2011, more than two-thirds of country offices reported that they met the global benchmarks. Country offices also report on their engagement with United Nations agencies and international financial institutions at country level on an annual basis. This enables systematic tracking of these important partnerships in particular, including their associated results.

20. UNICEF has also evaluated some key partnerships together with the partners concerned, such as the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development, and the standby arrangements for humanitarian response. These evaluations have illustrated the

³ VISION is the UNICEF integrated information management system, focusing on aligning business processes and tools in all UNICEF locations through transactional SAP applications and performance management.

⁴ A summary of this review process is included in the annual report of the Executive Director to the Executive Board

added value of the partnerships and highlighted their strengths while also identifying challenges and areas of improvement. For instance, the UNGEI evaluation showed that the partnership plays a prominent advocacy role and is a valuable mechanism for coordination. The establishment of some regional partnerships has been less successful and the achievement in outcome areas of UNGEI has varied across country partnerships.⁵

Enhanced partnership with governments

21. UNICEF recently introduced changes in its programme planning cycle to improve efficiency and flexibility. Based on informal consultations, this has enhanced the organization's partnerships with governments through the use of rolling workplans that align programme planning to government planning cycles. Moreover, the flexibility offered by the revised programme structure allows for country offices and government partners to plan more strategic multi-year results, which are not subject to 'calendar year' implementation limits.

22. The organization has stepped up its engagement with governments in championing specific children's issues on the global agenda. This includes joint advocacy and action with France on child soldiers, with Norway on conflict resolution, and with Russia and Japan on internet safety. UNICEF is also active in global high-level forums, particularly high-level conferences and the G20 and G8 summits. For example, it supported the Government of Canada in developing the Muskoka Initiative for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health during Canada's G8 presidency in 2010.

23. UNICEF is partnering with national parliaments in many countries to enhance their various functions related to children's rights, including oversight of resources from national budgets, establishment of strong policy directions and debate, and crafting laws that protect and promote children's rights. These partnerships have shown the importance of legislative action in holding governments, industry and civil society accountable for their responsibilities towards children. At the global level, the organization has strengthened its partnership with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, producing joint technical guidance and regularly co-convening capacity building and advocacy workshops.

24. In 2011, UNICEF developed an approach to mainstream and enhance its support to South-South cooperation.⁶ The approach emphasizes the organization's role as facilitator in promoting cooperation among developing countries to address cross-border and regional issues of child development and protection. For example, UNICEF supported the People's Republic of China in convening a high-level meeting on South-South Cooperation for Child Rights in the Asia Pacific Region in Beijing in 2010; a second high-level meeting is planned in India for 2013.

⁵ UNGEI, *Formative Evaluation of The United Nations Girl's Education Initiative*, Global Report, April 2012.

⁶ *UNICEF Approach to South-South Cooperation — Programme Guidance Note*, UNICEF, New York, February 2011.

How UNICEF partnerships contribute to results: some examples

- (a) Polio cases have decreased by over 99 per cent globally since 1988 through the Global Polio Eradication Initiative spearheaded by UNICEF, the World Health Organization, Rotary International and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- (b) Some 25 countries eliminated maternal and neonatal tetanus between 2000 and 2012 through a global network of partners including governments, United Nations agencies, health institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector.
- (c) Over 130 million long-lasting insecticide-treated mosquito nets to prevent malaria were procured globally in 2011 by all Roll Back Malaria partners.
- (d) The Flour Fortification Initiative, which builds alliances between governments and international agencies, wheat and flour industries, consumer and civic organizations, helped to provide nearly 2 billion people with access to flour fortified with vitamins and minerals in 2012 — 858 million more than in 2004, when the partnership began.
- (e) More than 85 million women in India are being reached with integrated health, nutrition and WASH interventions through close coordination with the Government, private sector and civil society.
- (f) The partnership with the GAVI Alliance contributed to reducing Hepatitis B vaccine prices by 68 per cent from 2000 to 2012 (dropping from \$0.56 to \$0.18 per dose).
- (g) Partner countries procured and delivered essential supplies, funded by the World Bank, from UNICEF for \$192 million in 2010, up from \$30 million in 2006.
- (h) The Global Partnership for Education, in which UNICEF plays a key role, has helped put 19 million more children in school since it was established in 2002.
- (i) Some 15 countries showed a 30 per cent increase in the number of villages that abandoned female genital mutilation/cutting between 2010 and 2012 through a broad range of partnerships at country level.

Strategic participation in the multilateral system

25. Since 2009, UNICEF has stepped up efforts to leverage the reach of multilateral organizations such as the World Bank Group, the International Monetary Fund, and regional development banks. Supported by a new relationship management structure that develops strategies, tools and guidance for engagement with the international financial institutions, the aim has been to mobilize support and action for a child rights agenda; achieve greater coherence in policies and approaches; disseminate and exchange information, knowledge and technical expertise; and facilitate funding, financing, procurement, and supply delivery arrangements.

26. As a result of these efforts, today about four-fifths of UNICEF country offices have some form of collaboration with the World Bank, half of them with the regional development banks, and two-fifths with the International Monetary Fund. A growing number of country offices are reporting on the positive results of these collaborations.

27. At the institutional level, the organization holds regular policy consultations with the international financial institutions, which have yielded concrete collaborations such as a joint UNICEF-World Bank guidance note on promoting a child lens in the Bank's Poverty and Social Impact Analyses; pilot partnerships with the International Monetary Fund in 11 countries to avoid adverse impacts of the economic crisis on the most vulnerable groups; joint efforts with the Inter-American Development Bank in education, birth registration, and sports for development; and collaboration with the African Development Bank on tackling the barriers for scaling up health intervention in Africa. In Asia, a Memorandum of Understanding agreed in 2010 with the Asian Development Bank has provided a solid framework for closer country collaboration, notably on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and education.

28. The organization maintains strong partnerships with economic and political groupings on various issues. For instance, with the League of Arab States and the Council of Europe, UNICEF is working to eradicate all forms of violence against children and protect vulnerable groups of children in those respective regions.

29. UNICEF is strongly committed to United Nations coherence as highlighted in a 2011 position paper entitled 'Making Coherence Work for Children'. The paper outlines UNICEF results-focused approach to engaging in United Nations coherence that aims to increase collective impact and reduce transaction costs. United Nations coherence enables the mobilization of a broad coalition around an equity-focused approach to reaching the most disadvantaged and deprived children.

A more strategic approach towards engagement in global programme partnerships

30. Since 2009, GPPs have continued to grow as effective means to leverage collective assets to achieve specific programme outcomes. UNICEF actively contributes to shaping and co-managing GPPs. It supports access of partner countries to GPP resources, helps in building national capacities, and, where applicable, directly conducts activities, for effective grant implementation and performance-based reporting, as well as joint advocacy and communications. With select GPPs, such as the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the Global Partnership for Education, and the GAVI Alliance, UNICEF and its partners have clarified joint purposes and improved predictability of engagement through consultations.

31. As with other partnerships, involvement in GPPs requires substantial human and other resource investments. In 2010, UNICEF, jointly with the World Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO), held a consultation with stakeholders from government, private sector and multilaterals on the strengths and weaknesses of institutional engagement in GPPs. It identified areas for mutual collaboration towards enhanced institutional policies and practices in GPPs such as building consensus on partnership terms, typologies and partnership analytical frameworks, and cross-agency sharing of management tools and business practices. These consultations helped UNICEF to lay out steps towards improved engagement, including ways to enter and exit partnerships.⁷

⁷ World Bank/UNICEF/WHO, "Improving Institutional Engagement in Global Program Partnerships: Policies and Practice Report of a UNICEF/World Bank/WHO Workshop", 9-10 February 2010, Geneva, Switzerland.

32. UNICEF, together with many other partners and stakeholders, engages in a significant number of GPPs. The level of the organization's involvement in such partnerships varies according to the alignment of issues with organizational priorities and mandate and related prioritization. The 2010 study of UNICEF engagement in GPPs was a first attempt to describe and assess the organizational implications of a rapidly growing portfolio. Internal policy and procedures for engagement in GPPs were strengthened as a result, including through the development of screening criteria, and of guidance on participation, governance, and the management of conflicts of interest.

Stronger partnerships with civil society organizations

33. Partnerships with CSOs play a vital role, particularly in implementing UNICEF-supported programmes. Since 2009, the organization has significantly improved its evidence base for civil society partnerships. Through case studies that document programmatic partnerships with CSOs, more is known about the factors that enable or constrain effective partnerships, as well as UNICEF ability to identify and respond to opportunities within the local civil society sector. The organization has strengthened its ability to monitor and analyse partnerships with CSOs that involve cash transfers using available data in the information management system. As a result, there is now greater clarity on which CSOs UNICEF is partnering with, in what regions and countries, on what focus areas and for what objectives, and the amount of cash that the organization is committing to these partnerships. This extensive information helps inform decision-making about the type of guidance needed for enhanced coordinated action with civil society, more equitable distribution of UNICEF resources, and more structured focus on achievement of results.

34. In advancing the equity agenda, UNICEF is reinforcing its engagement with community-based organizations to reach the most disadvantaged and excluded communities and to extend essential services. It also continues to strengthen its partnerships with other civil society actors to achieve equitable results for children, particularly working with civil society coalitions and networks. This includes organizations of persons with disabilities, and members of religious communities and organizations to address attitudes and practices that are harmful to children. At global level, UNICEF engages major child-focused international non-governmental organizations to promote collaborative approaches and joint initiatives to advance the equity agenda.

Fostering strong partnerships in humanitarian response

35. Humanitarian collaboration aims to improve the quality of the emergency response by UNICEF and its partners. Since 2009, the organization has been actively engaged in partnering more effectively and leveraging coordination forums for stronger results through the cluster approach and humanitarian platforms such as the IASC, often playing a leading role. For instance, the Education Cluster remains the only global cluster which is formally co-led by a United Nations agency and an NGO. With Save the Children International, UNICEF has forged new ways of working in this coordination body informed by a formal review of the partnership aspects as well as the impact of the co-leading arrangements on the effectiveness of the cluster itself.

36. In terms of policy commitment and strategies, UNICEF adopted in 2010 the revised Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs) that outline a framework, principles and accountabilities for partnerships in humanitarian action. The Humanitarian Action Report 2010 also highlighted UNICEF approaches and field experiences in collaborating in emergencies.

37. Key actions were undertaken to strengthen humanitarian partnerships. In 2010, UNICEF convened a consultation with humanitarian NGO partners, which highlighted the need for stronger partnership tools and monitoring of partnership performance, a joint capacity development strategy, sustained communication and enhanced knowledge management, and identified ways to improve administrative procedures. A review of the stand-by arrangements confirmed that standby partnership is an innovative and pragmatic way to deliver aid effectively. Its flexibility, the diversity of its partners and ability to deploy diverse sets of skills rapidly were seen as a key attribute of the partnership. The review also contributed to strengthening UNICEF and its partners' institutional commitment to partnerships in humanitarian action and led to an expansion of UNICEF standby partnerships.

Leveraging the full potential of corporate partnerships

38. UNICEF has made significant progress in expanding its approach to corporate engagement beyond fundraising. An internal guide was issued in 2011 that outlines a focus on wider resource mobilization partnerships, programme collaboration and innovation, and advancing children's rights within the context of the sustainable business agenda.

39. In resource mobilization partnerships, UNICEF and its National Committees are pursuing a more proactive and selective approach to engagement with the corporate sector, with greater emphasis on long-term, integrated partnerships leveraging a range of business competencies. In addition to raising funds for programmes for children, UNICEF and National Committees have also expanded engagement with business to raise awareness of children's issues, engage employees and customers, and provide expertise and help promote change for children.

40. UNICEF reviewed its due diligence process for corporate engagement in 2010 and since then has strengthened its screening criteria for all potential corporate partnerships as part of an expanded risk management approach.

41. Regarding Corporate Social Responsibility, UNICEF together with the United Nations Global Compact and Save the Children released the *Children's Rights and Business Principles*, which offer concrete guidance on what the corporate sector can do to support and promote children's rights. In addition, UNICEF has developed a specific guide entitled *Children are Everyone's Business: A Workbook on Children's Rights for the Corporate Sector* to help the corporate sector translate the principles into practice. Moreover, UNICEF has strengthened its capacity to engage with the corporate sector on corporate social responsibility through technical expertise, mapping and training initiatives, and related resource materials and tools.

42. UNICEF also stepped up its engagement in United Nations interagency collaboration on private sector matters to promote greater coherence, exchange of experiences and learning among the United Nations family, and to support the advancement of the Secretary-General's United Nations -business partnership agenda.

Strengthened cooperation with knowledge and research partners

43. An Office of Research was established in 2011 to strengthen UNICEF knowledge and research capacities. In 2012, a strategic framework was developed outlining an integrated approach for harnessing the organization's repository of knowledge into tangible results for children. Partnerships with knowledge and research institutions are key to this approach, with a focus on think tanks, foundations and academia, and a concerted effort towards enhanced partnerships with Southern research organizations. UNICEF is pursuing a range of knowledge partnerships at the national, regional and global levels in order to build a broad knowledge base on children's rights. At the same time, ensuring the quality and diversity of sources and data that knowledge and research partnerships create and disseminate will require a selective, coordinated approach to partnership development.

Strengthened cooperation with media and communication partners

44. UNICEF media and communication partnerships cover a broad range from the news media to social media, covering content, messaging, visuals and images. They also include relationships with celebrities and goodwill ambassadors. Besides advocacy campaigns with international media companies or global UNICEF ambassadors, most media and communication partnerships take place at country level. Communication is an inherent part of collaboration with all partners. The organization works jointly with partners to promote issues through advocacy and awareness campaigns such as shot@life and Every Woman Every Child.

45. In its communication partnerships, UNICEF is increasingly leveraging opportunities provided by new platforms and ways of engaging with a range of audiences. In order to optimize the efficient use of scarce resources communication partnerships are vital to help the organization and its partners gain visibility for children's issues in the global media, as well as secure respect for children's right to speak out and participate.

46. Continuous technological innovation has led to significant changes to the communication landscape; this presents both challenges and opportunities for engagement and outreach. The emergence of diverse communication channels requires that UNICEF complement its traditional media and publishing efforts with a presence on key Internet and social media platforms.

47. As recommended in the 2009 framework, UNICEF has advanced its presence on social media platforms to connect more directly with target audiences. Globalized communication and social media brings unprecedented opportunity to extend the organization's voice for children and motivate engagement in its mission. However, the opportunities come hand-in-hand with new challenges, including an increased potential for reputational risk and a growing demand for capacity to respond swiftly to new information.

Strengthened relationship with UNICEF National Committees

48. As autonomous national NGOs, UNICEF National Committees play a crucial role in raising funds and advocating for children's rights in industrialized countries. The special relationship of UNICEF with its National Committees is governed by a Recognition and Cooperation Agreement. A new Cooperation Agreement, finalized

in 2011, strengthens governance and provides the basis for expanded engagement with the private sector. It also articulates the role of National Committees in child rights advocacy in their countries and reinforces the importance of Joint Strategic Plans. The Joint Strategic Plan serves as an entry point for an annual joint review of the implementation of the Cooperation Agreement, provides guidance on UNICEF priorities and sets out how UNICEF can assist a National Committee in reaching its goals. In 2011-2012, some 15 new Joint Strategic Plans were signed.

49. Several other reference tools and guidelines have also been developed to support National Committees in their work including an advocacy toolkit and training guide, donor toolkits, risk management guidance, resource materials relating to corporate social responsibility, as well as various fundraising guides including for corporate practitioners, for digital and pledge fundraising, and for *Telling the UNICEF Story*.

III. Key lessons learned in partnering

50. UNICEF efforts to become more strategic and systematic have resulted in important lessons as highlighted below.

51. *Partnering should be driven by results, not actors.* The 2009 framework focused on strengthening engagement with specific partner types, such as GPPs, civil society organizations and the corporate sector. However, the principles and processes involved in effective partnering are similar across all partnerships, regardless of partner type. Successful partnerships begin with a results-focused approach that guides all stages of mapping, planning and managing of partnerships, whether at the country, regional or global level.

52. *Monitoring and evaluation of partnerships is challenging.* While some clear and documented examples of how partnerships contribute to results are available,⁸ largely in country office annual reports, these have been ad hoc and anecdotal. UNICEF, like many other organizations, still lacks a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluation of partnerships that would provide a comprehensive overview of partnerships' contribution to results.

53. UNICEF now recognizes the multiple dimensions of monitoring and evaluation of partnerships: the assessment of the contribution to results of a partnership; the individual contributions of partners to results; the value added of the partnership compared with alternative approaches; and the quality of the partnership including transaction costs. Each dimension implies a different focus and approach to the assessment and brings its own challenges.

54. *Global programme partnerships have country-level implications.* A common challenge with GPPs is their relevance, alignment and implementation at country level. It is challenging to translate globally agreed priorities into country-level activities without placing a burden on national governments to integrate them into existing national plans and programmes. Therefore, global partnerships require stronger coordination at all levels with the relevant partners.

55. *Partnerships should be based on comparative advantages.* Lessons drawn, particularly in programme partnerships, have outlined that partnerships can achieve

⁸ See progress section and accompanying case studies on various UNICEF partnerships.

both greater value for money and efficiencies when each partner brings their respective comparative advantage. Collaboration can be enhanced through upfront identification of complementary strengths and efforts to optimize these.

56. *Transformational change requires multiple stakeholders.* UNICEF engagement in multi-stakeholder partnerships and broader United Nations initiatives, especially at country level, shows that transformational change is achieved by bringing a range of actors together to tackle a specific development challenge or bottleneck. For instance, the Flour Fortification Initiative brought together governments, the corporate sector and civil society, resulting in the adoption of regulatory frameworks in more than 30 countries since 2004.

57. *Partnering requires greater selectivity.* The numerous tools and guidance, selection criteria and due diligence processes developed or refined over the past few years are supporting UNICEF offices in their decisions regarding partnering, including when to enter or exit a partnership. However, there is a need to become even more selective in partnering. Some country offices have initiated systematic mapping and analysis of potential partners and the partnership environment at the early stages of programme planning via a comprehensive analysis of the situation of women and children. However, these are not yet systematically undertaken by all offices. While there has been some progress in strengthening guidance on mapping partnerships within the standard situation analysis, there is room for improvement, both in terms of developing mapping and other tools and fostering greater integration of partnerships within programming.

58. *Internal coordination promotes efficiency.* As partnerships become more multidimensional in nature, an increasing number of staff working across functions, sectors and geographical levels need to contribute to the development and implementation of partnerships. Recent experiences in coordination of GPPs and engagement with the World Bank through focal points, cross-functional teams for the implementation of the 2009 framework as well as coordinated mechanisms for the review of proposed partnerships with civil society organizations (i.e. the Programme Cooperation Agreement Review Committee) have shown the value and importance of good internal coordination. These mechanisms can increase internal coherence and learning, enable complementarity, reduce overlaps and therefore contribute to greater effectiveness and efficiency.

59. *A systematic approach to partnership management maximizes effectiveness.* All partnerships follow a similar partnering cycle irrespective of the type, level or actors involved. This cycle encompasses the identification of potential partners as well as the planning, implementing and monitoring of the partnership. Experience has highlighted the importance of designating a focal point or manager to steward the partnership as a key contribution to its success. Using a partnering cycle lens helps to systematize the approach to partnership management and build internal capacity.

60. *Need for clear exit strategies.* Clearly defining an exit strategy is important, as some partnerships remain in place even though they no longer achieve results or add value. The Scaling Up Nutrition leadership group, chaired by UNICEF, decided to limit its lifespan to three years. After three years, the achievements of the partnership will be evaluated. The Scaling Up Nutrition leadership group will only continue if the evaluation shows improvements in the situation regarding nutrition.

61. *Institutional challenges remain in partnerships.* Engaging in partnerships at all levels requires significant dedicated resources for development, management, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The investment needed in the coordination mechanism for the partnership takes partners' attention away from the issues they are trying to tackle. In a context of limited resources and high need, it is difficult for the organization to fulfil all expectations in partnerships.

62. Moreover, in some places, administrative procedures remain a challenge for the organization and its partners. There are limitations to the use of standard modalities for new and non-traditional forms of partnerships (including the use of pre-certified agreements), resulting in the lengthy case-by-case development of agreements. Innovative approaches to planning and managing of partnerships and their integration in UNICEF processes are being documented and promoted throughout the organization in order to continuously improve partnership practices and modalities as well as reduce the administrative burden.

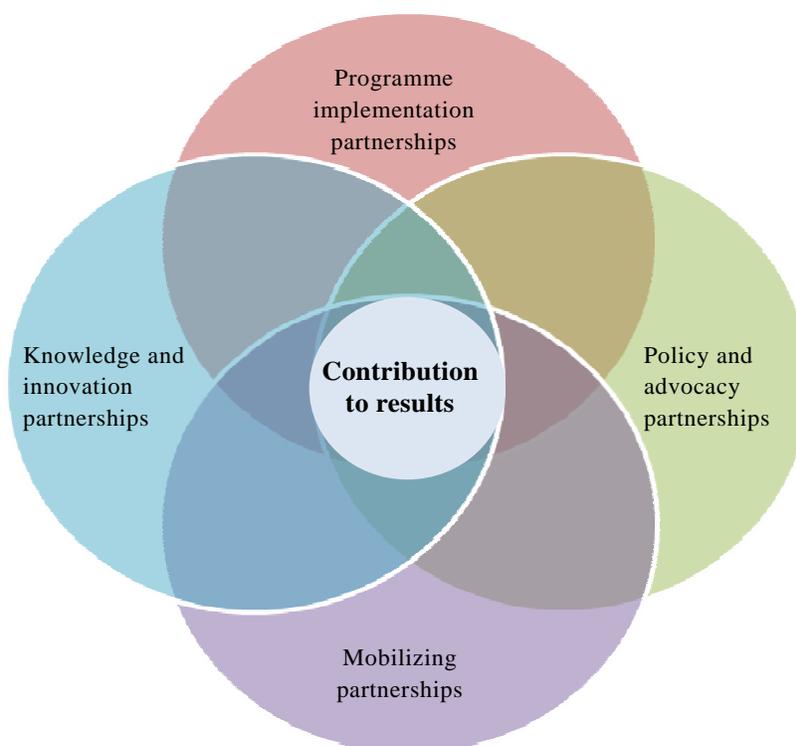
IV. The way forward

63. Shifts in the partnership landscape as well as the organization's policy and programme priorities have led to changes in the character of UNICEF partnering. The expanded framework proposes three priority approaches that outline how UNICEF will ensure more effective partnerships: (a) framing the contribution of partnerships to results; (b) investing strategically in multi-stakeholder partnerships; and (c) strengthening organizational capacity for effective partnering by adopting a systematic approach to the management of partnerships.

Framing the contribution of partnerships to results

64. As the primary guiding principle, the focus on delivering results for children is central to the selection, development and management of partnerships. Broadly, partnerships will contribute to results in one or more of the following ways:

Figure 1
Contribution of partnerships to results



(a) *Programme implementation partnerships* contribute to the implementation of programmes, increasing particularly the reach and coverage of essential supplies and services through direct intervention and capacity development, in cooperation with governments in programme countries.

(b) *Knowledge and innovation partnerships* contribute to the development and strengthening of technical expertise, fostering development and introduction of innovative solutions to children's issues, and establishing strategies for scale-up.

(c) *Policy and advocacy partnerships* contribute to development and adoption of norms and standards, policies and legislation, and increased investment in child rights. Partnerships focus on collaboration and coordinated approaches to evidence-based policy advocacy and communication. These partnerships support the positioning of children's issues within the development agenda, and contribute to building political momentum and visibility.

(d) *Mobilizing partnerships* help to mobilize financial and non-financial resources from donors and other partners in support of UNICEF-assisted programmes. They also complement advocacy partnerships by helping to mobilize public awareness of children's issues through targeted communication, particularly in industrialized countries.

65. This classification of partnerships can be applied at global, regional and country levels, and links UNICEF engagement with partners to the achievement of

specific results for children. The categories are not mutually exclusive; partnerships often fall into more than one category.

66. Such classification will enhance the UNICEF approach to partnerships in various ways. First, it will help the organization identify and approach partners at the planning stage by promoting greater consistency between a type of partnership and the respective programme approach to achieve results. Second, it will create a broad framework for analysing and assessing the contribution of partnerships to results for children, on which tools and guidance for monitoring and evaluation can build. Third, it will strengthen partnerships within other programme strategies, such as advocacy, capacity development, and knowledge management, and in considering key programming principles, including the human rights-based approach, gender and environmental sustainability.

Investing strategically in multi-stakeholder partnerships

67. With a partnership landscape increasingly characterized by a complex web of actors, a multi-stakeholder approach is crucial to accelerate progress, as it brings relevant actors together to identify and solve specific issues faced by children. Therefore, UNICEF will strengthen its ability to be a facilitator and to contribute effectively to issue-specific, multi-actor partnerships in pursuit of the equity agenda.

68. UNICEF will focus on its added value and convening capacity, building on a compelling mandate and global presence. It will also work to use evidence-based advocacy effectively, harnessing the organization's ability and track record in addressing transnational issues such as negotiating prices of essential commodities with industry.

69. UNICEF will support the identification of key results, and will help to model and monitor these results. It will promote alignment of priorities and strategies as well as coherence and coordination of efforts. At the country level, UNICEF, in coordination with other United Nations agencies, will support national partners to integrate and coordinate the various programme partnership initiatives and their implementation.

70. UNICEF will foster multi-stakeholder approaches in various ways:

(a) *Programme implementation.* Participating in sector-wide approaches and development fora and contributing the cluster approach in humanitarian action, in coordination with other United Nations agencies.

(b) *Policy and advocacy.* Positioning children within the development agenda, leveraging support for issues and strategically engaging in high-level fora.

(c) *Knowledge and innovation.* Scaling up innovation, bringing together governments, civil society and private sector to find solutions to children's issues.

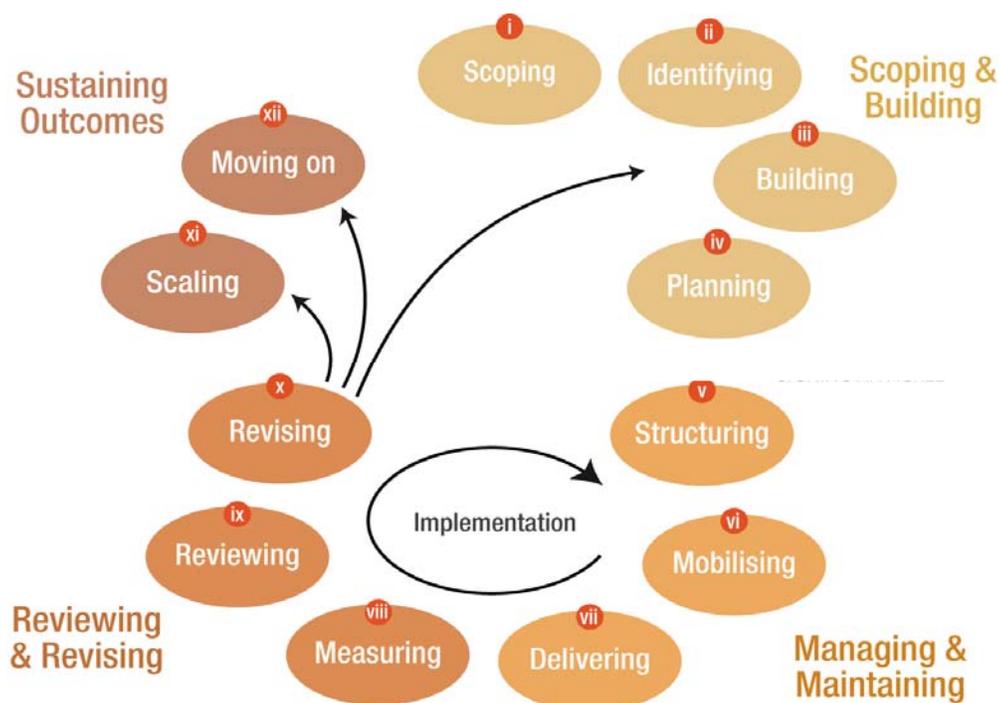
(d) *Mobilizing resources.* Engaging in innovative financing for development mechanisms to facilitate the pooling of resources.

Strengthening organizational capacity for effective partnering

71. As highlighted in the section on lessons learned, the management of partnerships is best approached through the lens of a partnering cycle. This will

ensure a harmonized and systematic approach across the organization, following the steps of the partnering cycle.

Figure 2
The partnering cycle



Source: The Partnering Initiative, *The Partnering Toolbook* (January 2011).

Note: The letters i to xii refer to the sequencing of the steps to be followed within the partnering cycle.

72. At each step of the partnership cycle, UNICEF will work to strengthen its capacity, systems and processes, in order to foster stronger management of partnerships. This will be undertaken by focussing on the integration of partnership approaches, guidance and tools in programme planning and management processes.

73. *Scoping and building.* UNICEF will systematize mapping and analysis of stakeholders and the partnership landscape to inform the development of country programmes and regional and headquarters management plans. In line with its risk management policy, UNICEF will strengthen its ability to make risk-aware decisions, enabling the organization to engage in innovative partnerships while mitigating and managing risks. It will also continue to strive to improve transparency, simplifying and strengthening the modalities of engagement with various partners, in part by reducing the administrative burden of partnerships in close consultation with partners. In particular, it will be open about its strengths and weaknesses, expectations of partnerships and internal processes.

74. *Managing and maintaining.* UNICEF will strengthen relevant internal structures and foster an enabling environment to promote coordinated approaches and provide strategic advice and guidance to country offices. Special attention will be given to establishing mechanisms to strengthen communication with partners, particularly in line with the principles of parity in partnership. UNICEF will strive towards increased understanding of the partners' perspectives and the recognition of their equal contribution in order to promote peer relationships.

75. *Reviewing and revising.* UNICEF will continue to strengthen mechanisms for monitoring the performance of partnerships. It will more systematically track and evaluate the contribution of partnerships to results, particularly by employing an appropriate mix of methodologies to monitor and evaluate partnerships. Partnership assessment will also be integrated in relevant monitoring and evaluation practices, as appropriate. The organization will attempt to assess the added value and contribution of specific partnerships to results as well as the quality, transaction costs and overall performance of various partnership strategies. The organization also plans to continue to collect good practices systematically, in line with its programme strategy for knowledge management.

76. *Sustaining outcomes.* UNICEF will strengthen strategies for the conclusion of partnerships or, as appropriate, for exploring further expansion of the partnerships, and for better integration of results into existing initiatives and programmes. Such a decision should be taken based on a careful review of the results to be achieved and the opportunities that exist. It will assess the long-term potential of partnerships and will plan its resources and support adequately. A long-term perspective may require that attention be paid to capacity development of partners, stronger engagement in planning and knowledge sharing, and hence maintaining — and, in some cases, increasing — the level of resources in order to achieve scale and sustainability.

Conclusion

77. UNICEF is strongly committed to partnerships with all relevant actors. This expanded framework on partnerships will inform the end-of-cycle review of the current medium-term strategic plan (MTSP) and provide an important input to the development of the next MTSP (2014-2017). UNICEF has proactively taken a number of steps to become more strategic in its partnering, and will continue to build organizational capacity to further improve such initiatives. This will be undertaken by more systematically embedding the practice of partnering into programme planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting processes at national, regional and global levels; by effectively using various mechanisms to advance the partnership agenda; and through a systematic approach to the management and coordination of partnerships. The organization will develop and disseminate the necessary tools, guidance and staff development programmes to enhance partnering efforts and to promote positive partnership attitudes, knowledge and skills sets.

78. UNICEF will proactively engage in multi-stakeholder partnerships and coordination mechanisms at all levels in order to promote children's issues in the development agenda. It will strengthen its analysis of the partnership environment, emerging trends and opportunities for engagement, with a view to leveraging and maximizing development results for children.