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Summary of midterm reviews of country programmes

East Asia and Pacific region

Summary

This regional summary of midterm reviews of country programmes conducted in 2011 was prepared in response to Executive Board decision 1995/8 (E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1). The Executive Board is invited to comment on the report and provide guidance to the secretariat.

* E/ICEF/2012/15.



Introduction

1. During 2011, Timor-Leste was the only country in the in the East Asia and Pacific region, to conduct a midterm review (MTR) of its country programme. The current country programme was developed with the Government of Timor-Leste for the period 2009-2013, in the context of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) covering the same period.

2. The MTR was carried out during a period of review of the United Nations capacity and approaches to contribute to the achievement of results in a coherent, efficient and effective manner. The context included changes in the country's situation, with an increasing resource base placing Timor-Leste on track to reach the status of a middle-income country, with associated shifts in development assistance, including United Nations contributions, and the transition from humanitarian to development priorities in which the United Nations has played a major supporting role. Key features in both of these shifts are the focus on the equity agenda and an emphasis on results for children.

Midterm review

Timor-Leste

Introduction

3. An internal midterm review of the 2009-2013 UNICEF Timor-Leste programme of cooperation began in March 2011 as a process of consultation between UNICEF, government counterparts and development partners as a systematic reflection on the country programme in the first half of its operation. A review meeting was held on 28 June 2011 in Dili with the Government and other partners.

4. The MTR was held to assess progress and determine what revisions, if any, were required in view of the performance of the country programme, changes in the situation of children and women, and changes in the United Nations and aid environments. The MTR had three specific objectives: (a) review the performance of the country programme over the first two-and-a-half years in terms of its contributions to improving the situation of children and women in the country; (b) refocus and potentially realign the country programme with the changing situation; and (c) refine the programme if and as required for the second half of the country programme period.

Update of the situation of children and women

5. Timor-Leste continues to strengthen its development process within the framework of its National Strategic Development Plan, 2011-2030. Key challenges remain in addressing poverty reduction, maternal mortality, malnutrition, school completion and sanitation, which are currently off-track towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals, and in securing peace and sustainability. In March 2011, the National Police took over the full responsibility of security from the United Nations Police for the entire country. Preparations were set in motion for national presidential and parliamentary elections in 2012. The Timor-Leste Government and the United Nations Mission in Timor-Leste agreed that the Mission

would withdraw by the end of 2012, based on the assumption that there is stability and a fair election process. The Joint Transition Plan was signed on 19 September 2011.

6. The country has seen strong economic growth since 2007 with a non-oil gross domestic product (GDP) annual growth rate of 9.5 per cent in 2010 and an estimated 10.6 per cent in 2011. The main source of revenue is offshore petroleum. Timor-Leste's economy has the highest degree of oil dependency in the world. Revenues are placed in a Petroleum Fund, whose balance increased from \$6.9 billion at the end of 2010 to \$9.7 billion at the end of 2011. The total State budget allocation in 2011 was \$1.3 billion, almost double that of 2010 (\$758.7 million) for the Government's annual recurrent and development expenditure. A budget of \$1.674 billion was approved by the Parliament for 2012, with 89 per cent deriving from the Petroleum Fund. A large share (46 per cent) of the 2011 national budget was spent on basic infrastructure. Within this, \$65 million was allocated for the Millennium Village initiative, focusing on improvement of community housing, small-scale construction of roads, solar power, and water and sanitation facilities. Some \$25 million was allocated in 2011 to improve human resource capacity, including training for government officials, teachers and health workers.

7. Timor-Leste has already achieved Millennium Development Goal 4 on reducing child mortality and is on track to achieve the targets for primary school enrolment, gender equality in education and improved access to safe drinking water. It is, however, still off-track on achieving the Goals on poverty reduction (41 per cent of the people live on less than 88 cents per day), nutrition (45 per cent of children under 5 are underweight and 58 per cent are stunted), maternal mortality (557 per 100,000 live births), quality education (only 66 per cent reach grade 5) and sanitation (39 per cent of households have access to sanitation facilities). A Millennium Development Goals Acceleration Framework for improved nutrition and maternal health was developed by the Government in cooperation with the United Nations and key donors, including the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), the European Union and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), capturing all the interventions as well as partners' roles and responsibilities and resources required for accelerated reduction of under-nutrition and maternal mortality. An in-depth case study — "Under-five mortality in Timor-Leste (2003-2009): Why the improvement?" — was conducted with the support of UNICEF to document the success and contributing factors leading to the sharp decline in the infant and child mortality rate and the achievement of Goal 4.

8. According to the 2010 Population and Housing Census, about 20 per cent of the population comprises adolescents (aged 10-17 years), 20 per cent are young people (aged 15-24), and 27 per cent are considered youth (aged 15-30). The Census found that while 40 per cent of young men (aged 15-30) are engaged in employment (with at least two hours' work with payment), only 23 per cent of young women are employed. Over one-third of women aged 15-29 have experienced physical violence since age 15. Compounded with the legacy of years of conflict, aggression and brutality, peace promotion activities still have not completely succeeded in eradicating violence. Youth development remains a major challenge for the country, especially in peacebuilding and promotion of non-violent conflict resolution mechanisms.

9. The National Strategic Development Plan for 2011-2030, released in July 2011, provides a vision to 2030, a framework of action to 2020 and a public investment plan to 2015. It focuses on four key areas: (a) social capital; (b) infrastructure development; (c) economic development; and (d) institutional framework.

Progress and key results at midterm

10. The country programme promotes improved quality of life of children and women through reductions in malnutrition, morbidity and mortality; strengthened learning achievement; and enhanced social protection for children, young people, women and men by 2013. It is organized into seven programme components: (a) health and nutrition; (b) basic education; (c) water, sanitation and hygiene; (d) child protection; (e) adolescents and youth participation; (f) communication; and (g) planning, monitoring and evaluation.

11. The country programme supports policies, legislation, institutional mechanisms and capacities, sectoral and thematic plans and programmes at the national level as well as interventions at the district and sub-district levels, in collaboration with government mechanisms and local communities. UNICEF technical staff work closely with the Government through sectoral working groups in the areas of health, nutrition, education, water supply and sanitation, child protection, and communication. As a result of sustained advocacy and technical assistance by UNICEF, often in collaboration with other development partners, several policies, laws, programmes and guidelines on children's issues were formulated or are in process, including the National Immunization Strategy (2011); the Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Strategy (2010); the National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan (2011-2016); the National Policy on Inclusive Education (to be approved); the National Sanitation Policy (in draft); the Juvenile Justice Law (to be approved); and the Child Rights Code (to be approved). The country programme was also highly instrumental in the development of Timor-Leste's Youth Parliament.

12. Sustained capacity development through technical assistance and training, including workshops and mentoring by staff and consultants has helped strengthen institutional capacities and contributed to the development of a critical mass of human resources within the country in the pursuit of children's rights. For example, support has been extended for strengthening institutional capacities of the Ministry of Education in curriculum and textbook development. To enhance the work of the National Police with children in contact with the law, UNICEF supported capacity-building efforts to strengthen the Vulnerable Person's Unit, the Community Police Unit, the sub-districts' commanders on child protection, rules and operational procedures for investigating child abuse and dealing with children. UNICEF helped to strengthen a decentralized social welfare system for children by enhancing the capacities of professionals working in the field of child and family welfare through a series of trainings on child protection, case management, positive discipline methods, communication skills, mediation and activity planning at the district and village (*suco*) levels.

13. UNICEF advocacy and technical support, including through the appointment of technical advisers and consultants in government ministries and departments, has led to the transfer of technical knowledge to the Government. The appointment of district nutrition coordinators assisted the Ministry of Health and the District Health

Services in the nationwide scaling up of the Community Management of Acute Malnutrition programme. A total of 22 posts of nutrition staff, including 13 district nutrition coordinators, initially supported by UNICEF, have been absorbed by the Government's core funding. The sub-district facilitators initially appointed by UNICEF with the responsibility of providing technical support in the maintenance of water, sanitation and hygiene education (WASH) facilities in communities in 64 sub-districts have been taken over by the Government. Likewise, Child Protection Officers have been appointed in all 13 districts.

14. Considerable progress has been made in the generation of gender-disaggregated data through the implementation of surveys and routine data collection. This has contributed to more focused planning and monitoring processes for equitable development. Institutional delivery mechanisms and quality of work in core sectors have been strengthened to improve the delivery of basic services, particularly in health and nutrition, education, and child protection programmes. The health and nutrition programmes have strengthened community-based approaches in the delivery of the basic services package by augmenting the integrated community health services of the Government (*Servisu Integradu Saude Comunitaria*).

15. Partnerships with and for children and youth have been promoted through student councils in schools, youth parliament for out-of-school adolescents and youth, sports and lifeskills-based education initiatives, in collaboration with the National Youth Council, youth groups and youth centres and through a regular children's radio programme, in coordination with several community radios. Children and youth participation in key national events was also promoted.

Resources used

16. A total expenditure of \$60 million was planned for the five-year country programme, of which \$5 million was from UNICEF regular resources and up to \$55 million from other resources. As of July 2011, \$39 million (about 65 per cent of total country programme budget ceiling) had been received. An estimated \$24 million (62 per cent of the available budget) had been spent up to end June 2011. Other resources were mobilized from a wide range of donors and partners, including the Governments of Japan, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain (the Spanish Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund); the European Commission; the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA); AusAID; the UNICEF National Committees of Australia, Japan and the Republic of Korea; and other multi-donors through UNICEF thematic funds.

Constraints and opportunities affecting progress

17. The country programme has responded to the issues of children by prioritizing focus according to identified needs and opportunities. However, progress in implementation of some programme components was constrained by the pace of process in promulgation of several key policies and legislation and the continuing evolution of some critical structures and mechanisms. Limited human resources and limited capacity of public and non-public service providers were major impediments to achieving universal coverage of certain basic services (for example, immunization, elementary education) and effectively targeting interventions to address specific issues faced by girls and boys of different ages in different areas

and socio-economic groups. Limited availability of subject specialists within the country is a particular challenge for implementing the programme.

18. Reaching hard-to-reach areas, ensuring sustained supply of essential commodities, availability of supportive supervision with a capacity-building focus, monitoring and follow up to ensure the quality and continuity of services, as well as community participation and/or ownership of interventions, have been recurring concerns in many programme components. Although much progress has been made in improving the information base on children, developing good quality databases for effective routine monitoring also remains a challenge.

19. Looking to the remainder of the country programme, the Government is committed to addressing the Millennium Development Goals targets where the country is off-track. The national thrust for achieving the Goals provides UNICEF and other development partners with the direction and framework for extending their support. Progress in development of policy frameworks, legislation and administrative mechanisms is expected to improve calibration of the country programme with the larger national development agenda. The national strategic plans for the health and education sectors for 2011-2030 are a basis to facilitate harmonization with national priorities and convergent action by UNICEF and other development partners. Once the 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections are completed, there is a window of opportunity to restructure government ministries and departments to improve the number and deployment of personnel, including through the creation of additional positions at the regional, district and sub-district levels to assist with sectoral work. However, the country programme is also cognizant of the limitations that exist in human capacity to fill new posts, and delays in policy approvals and service delivery implementation caused by a major reorganization.

20. Efforts are being made to enhance learning through South-South cooperation, including for the orientation of adolescents and youth to participatory structures and mechanisms and for training the social welfare work force. Advocacy of good practices from other countries, particularly adapted for application in Timor-Leste, will add value. Communication for development needs to be further strengthened focusing on improving child-rearing behaviour among different duty-bearers. To strengthen planning and monitoring, improved quality of data analysis will enable more nuanced discussion and understanding of cross-cutting issues, such as equity and gender. New or improved indicators are needed for information on children with disabilities and children in need of special protection. The 2010 Census results will make available information useful for development of policies and programmes, but management information systems also need to be strengthened.

21. The MTR highlighted the importance of system-level priorities that require a longer time frame and expanded resources, including continued strengthening of accountability mechanisms for children's rights. The next State Party Report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, due in November 2013, provides an opportunity for collective reflection on the children's rights agenda.

Adjustments made

22. The MTR concluded that the current planned country programme strategies and results remain generally relevant and are in line with the sectoral strategic plans

and national priorities. Specific recommendations were made to support improved focus on results in the second half of the country programme cycle.

23. The country programme will continue to focus on strategic interventions in the major areas that are off-track (maternal mortality, under-nutrition, school completion, rural water and sanitation) for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It will take the lead in areas in which UNICEF has a comparative advantage, such as nutrition and quality education. It will be aligned with the Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan and continue to seek guidance from sectoral policies and plans. The country programme will maintain and strengthen its equity focus, working at the national level to strengthen policies, legislation and systems on children's issues in the interest of sustainability, while promoting action at sub-regional and community levels to ensure equitable opportunities for children. It will support the development and implementation of a communication strategy with a focus on programme communication and behavioural impact and participation by children, youth and other community members.

24. Actions on the Goals off-track areas, particularly maternal mortality, under-nutrition and HIV/AIDS, and water, sanitation and hygiene, will be intensified to accelerate progress towards the Goals targets. Efforts in basic education will continue to build on the success of the Eskola Foun/Child-Friendly School Programme and further promote development of policy, standards and models in relevant areas, including early childhood education, multilingual education and inclusive education to facilitate the provision of education to excluded groups, including re-entry of pregnant girls into school. The child protection programme will aim at improvements in the collection, consolidation and analysis of child protection data, and enhanced coordination and referral mechanisms among the Child Protection Officers, the Community Police Unit, the Vulnerable Persons' Unit, sub-districts and the Prosecutor as well as between the traditional and formal justice structures.

25. To strengthen adolescent and youth participation, the programme will facilitate a review of youth policy implementation and support the development of a youth sector coordination mechanism. Across the country programme, attention will be given to fine-tuning communication for development with an equity perspective, assisting the Government with a communication strategy to support children's issues and strengthening networking/partnership with frontline workers, community opinion leaders and children. In addition, the country programme will expand the scope of its support to ensure collection, analysis and use of strategic, disaggregated gender-sensitive information on the situation of children and women for better results for children, and generation of knowledge and good practices on children's issues. Studies on budgeting analysis for children will be linked with sectoral initiatives such as Marginal Budgeting for Bottlenecks in Health.

Conclusion

26. The MTR findings confirmed that, although categorized as a middle-income country, Timor-Leste continues to face development challenges of lingering post-conflict tensions, a high population growth rate and significant limitations of service coverage, infrastructure and human resource capacity. The conclusion of the midterm review to sharpen the equity focus and address the remainder of the

country programme to off-track Millennium Development Goals, while ensuring that the country does not regress on other Goals targets, remains prudent. At the same time, with the growing prominence of government and other actors in Timor-Leste and the withdrawal of the United Nations Mission, there is need for additional emphasis on strategic interventions as well.

27. For UNICEF to keep pace with the changing development context and the need for upstream work and refocusing on equity, an enhanced range of capacities and skills in communication and advocacy, partnership development, social policy and statistics are needed to complement traditional UNICEF strengths, in order to advance evidence-based programming and policies for children within United Nations country processes. Efforts to enhance learning through South-South cooperation will be particularly critical.

28. It is important that UNICEF remains engaged and works with the Government, the United Nations and development partners towards developing strategies that take greatest advantage of the opportunities offered by the country's natural resource wealth and to mitigate negative impacts that are expected to continue to arise. UNICEF will also continue to contribute to the transition from a humanitarian to a development focus by the United Nations. It will be valuable to document Timor-Leste's experience of transitioning from a post-conflict situation towards sustainable development.
