
An Evaluation of UNICEF Programming at Sub- National Level in Latin America.

An evaluation for the
UNICEF Regional Office for
Latin America and the
Caribbean

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The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of UNICEF or those of people interviewed unless specifically quoted, and are solely attributable to the evaluator

Executive Summary

UNICEF has seen some spectacular success in Latin America, in support of sub-national programmes that work well and have become a template for national programmes. Two important examples are in Brazil, *Bolsa Escola*; and in Peru, *Buen Inicio*. The former started in the Federal District of Brasilia and the State of Minas Gerais, to get children out of work and into school. It then became a national programme before combining with other subsidy and cash transfer programmes to evolve into *Bolsa Familia*. The latter, in Peru, was a nutrition programme that started in the Southern Andes and became the template for the acclaimed *Creceer* national programme. In both examples UNICEF was involved from the initial stages. For *Bolsa Escola* this was often in association with other agencies in developing concept papers or assessing results. At different stages from 1995 onwards, the World Bank, ILO and UNESCO were all involved with promoting and supporting the programme and its expansion. This highlights two important points regarding UNICEF cooperation with countries in The Americas and Caribbean Region: firstly the importance of piloting innovations, whether they emerge from individual ideas, local practice or are taken as a learning experience from elsewhere; and secondly, a fixed sub-regional presence by UNICEF is not a prerequisite to do this. In both the above cases the UNICEF country office undertook the major work of supporting the pilot, whether discussing design, partnering in implementation or evaluating progress.

Nevertheless, a sub-national presence became helpful in both the above examples to support the expansion nationally, thus becoming a catalyst for the adoption of good practice. In addition a UNICEF presence at a sub-national level, either directly or through an implementing partner, has also fostered or developed innovation and pilots. Some of these, such as two examples in Mexico, in Juvenile Justice and in Education, are already successful at State level and the challenge for UNICEF and its partners will be to get the good practice adopted as policy nationwide, and potentially by other countries.

UNICEF, similar to some of its partners, has often had to decide on the best way to support sub-national programmes. Sometimes this has led to sub-national offices, or zonal offices, being opened. The reasons UNICEF has opted for such a solution at particular points in time include: host governments agreeing to focus on underserved regions of a country or making up for prior neglect; as a UNICEF or UN response to an emergency; or simply to enhance access that had been difficult due to distance or time to reach a particular location or population group.

According to the findings of this study, in the past, zone offices or other types of sub-national presence were not necessarily set up with clear programmatic objectives, results frameworks or time-frames. Evidence shows that in the Americas and Caribbean region of UNICEF, a sub-national presence was mainly set up to respond to two overriding reasons: either a) to provide additional support in a part of the country with particularly poor social indicators but (usually) with an active local counterpart; or b) to compensate for difficulty of access when travelling to or from a region, usually expressed in terms of time taken and the difficult logistics to get there, rather than distance. In some instances a presence was maintained not by setting up an office

structure but by undertaking frequent missions from the capital to a particular part of the country; by placing consultants with local counterparts, usually government authorities; by hiring UN volunteers to represent UNICEF; or by becoming part of a joint UN office that was being established in a particular part of a country.

Given modern communications and the ubiquitous presence of the mobile telephone, and, although less so, the Internet, reason b) above, based on a problem of access, seems no longer to be as valid as it once was. A relatively new reason has been the need to “accompany” the process of decentralization of political and financial decision making from central government to municipalities, and to focus on the poorest municipalities. This suggests that UNICEF country offices will need to constantly assess or re-assess their priorities when deciding on how best to support national authorities to achieve their objectives for social or economic equity or to advocate for greater attention to a particular geographical area of the country, a minority or ethnic group, etc. Given that in 2008 UNICEF’s Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) 2006-2009 was extended for two years, and one of the reasons for this was to make the next plan (2012-2015) align with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)¹ a good starting point may be to assess what support is needed to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Although in 2009 the MTSP was extended for a further two years to 2013², UNICEF’s orientation to Executive Board members in January 2011³ underscored a major re-focus on the achievement of MDGs with equity showing a) the link of each key focus area of the original MTSP (2006-9) to one or more MDGs; and b) the need for additional focus in the following areas:

1. increased emphasis on disaster risk reduction, effective humanitarian response and preparedness;
2. more effective use of communication for development to promote positive behavioural practices in support of child outcomes;
3. greater focus on children in poor, climate-insecure and under-served urban areas;
4. leveraging of new opportunities for adolescents and young people, including through information technology;
5. promoting and engaging in policy dialogue in support of national planning and monitoring, through evidence-based advocacy.

To help countries approach this systematically, this evaluation proposes a process for reviewing a hierarchy of decision making that will ensure that UNICEF’s support to development in a country responds best to its function and purpose for a particular time period and within the resources available to it.

¹ UNICEF Executive Board Decision 2008/14

² UNICEF Executive Board Decision 2009/5

³ “Investing in Children – the UNICEF contribution to Poverty Reduction and the Millennium Summit Agenda” UNICEF Orientation Session for Executive Board Members, 11 January 2011

The findings show that sub-national programming has been both relevant and effective; it has addressed major disparities; built or strengthened capacity to address these; and succeeded in systematically influencing policy and practice.

They also show that most of the sub-national presence in LAC has been to reduce the disparities affecting the most disadvantaged and marginalized. In order to align with UNICEF's Equity Agenda in the future decision making on sub-national presence will also need to take into account geographical areas where most disadvantaged people are concentrated in order to have greater influence on priorities, programmes and structures to achieve equity.

The role of UNICEF in each case reviewed was highlighted as critical by government counterparts. It is also clear that the capacity of local counterparts was critical in each successful case whether engaged through a zonal office, a joint UN office and outposted staff, or through a local implementing partner. The last of these, however, shows most promise in becoming the modality of choice for creating an environment for sustainable action.

The recommendations suggest understanding the country programme as a rolling plan that requires a management approach that can easily adapt to evolving needs and changing situations. They also highlight the need to build or strengthen counterpart institutional capacity at both sub-national and national levels, through involvement in regular orientation or training programmes or through block grants. They suggest actively seeking local implementing partners, whether from government, civil society or academia and determining if a sub-national presence is needed and , if so, providing the rationale for it (type, purpose, time-frame). Finally a process chart for a decision making flow is proposed for determining the type of sub-national presence needed.

Background and Terms of Reference

UNICEF has made use of its sub-national presence in countries in The Americas and Caribbean Region (LAC) for over 20 years. In UNICEF terminology this presence is referred to as a Zone Office, Project Office or Private Fundraising and Partnership Office. In LAC, as of January 2011, there were 22 such offices (in a ratio of 18:2:2)⁴. These different types of office are all related to the programming process of UNICEF's cooperation in a country by linking the results outlined in the Country Programme Document with a management strategy that relies on a sub-national presence.

This evaluation was requested by TACRO in order to assess changing programming modalities in the region away from mainly service delivery at the local level towards programming that

⁴ Preliminary Summary of Observations on an Audit of the Management of Zone Offices, UNICEF Office of Internal Audit, January 2011, page 3

influences social policy at different levels of government, particularly at national level, and this in the context of the six core strategic roles of the UNICEF Approach in Middle-Income countries.⁵ In summary these are:

- a) Support to the monitoring of children's and women's rights;
- b) Strengthen national and local capacities in key public sector and civil society institutions;
- c) Advocate for pro-child and gendered policies, laws and/or budgets;
- d) Promote and enhance partnerships for children, including with national and local government, private sector and civil society;
- e) Promote and support attention to major issues of disparities, exclusion and discrimination at national and sub-national levels; and
- f) Facilitate the documentation and evaluation of experience and exchange of knowledge.

With the gradual shift from what UNICEF describes as 'downstream' work (project oriented and service delivery based work at local or community level) to 'upstream' work (influencing policies at all levels of government), UNICEF wishes to identify the appropriate mix of the two approaches in different settings within the region.

This approach was underlined by UNICEF's Executive Director, Tony Lake in an interview published in September 2010. In response to the question "How do we balance the traditional focus on providing services with a growing emphasis on systems and policies?" he responded as follows, *"You have to do both. The question is really how you integrate the two. If you only do programmes and services on child survival, you are condemning your efforts to being transitory, and you will have to repeat them over and over again. For those efforts to be effective and sustainable, you need to work on systems. On the other hand, if you just try to advocate with governments on producing better systems and macro-policies, then you become almost an academic institution, and you are not nearly as good at advocacy. The strongest advocacy is based on our practical experience and the use of models that governments can take to scale."*⁶

Mr. Lake continued to talk of the best advocates having practical experience and that there are not two separate streams of action (advocacy and service delivery). He also spoke of equity and the rights of children as applying to all children including in middle-income countries and in the industrialized world and that the equity strategy needs to be built up from the countries themselves; one size does not fit all.

For almost twenty years, countries with sub-national programmes have been following a modality first suggested in a multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF programmes by Australia, Canada, Denmark and Switzerland that was published in 1992⁷. This recommended that all programmes should have elements of service delivery, capacity building as well as advocacy

⁵ UNICEF's Approach in Middle Income Countries – Six Core Strategic Roles, Division of Policy and Practice, May 2010. Discussion Paper by Richard Morgan and Robert Jenkins

⁶ Staff News, UNICEF, September 2010, page 4

⁷ Evaluation of UNICEF Programme Strategies, External Cooperation, Management, Governance, and Strategic Choices, 1992, by Australia, Canada, Denmark and Switzerland

and empowerment and that the right balance had to be developed in response to country conditions and opportunities. The assumptions behind the recommendations were that the poorer the country, the greater the likelihood of a focus on service delivery and that the management capacity of government and other partners would be limited. This would provide a justification for UNICEF to consider having a sub-national field presence focused on implementation, monitoring, technical advice and capacity building. By the same token, the richer the country, the greater were the opportunities for UNICEF to play an advocacy role regarding policies and resources for children. Nevertheless, it was soon recognized that GNI per capita was not necessarily a good predictor of the right mix of strategies. However, the evaluation found that UNICEF needed to be more explicit about the strategic choices it was taking in different countries. UNICEF was not making the best use of two of the intervention strategies: capacity building for sustained programme delivery and empowerment of target groups.⁸

By 2003, the Multilateral Organizations Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN)⁹ saw UNICEF as strong in capacity building and able to cooperate with Non-Governmental Organizations and had become able to take decisions at country level. It had become an important opinion leader, although tended to work in isolation of other partners and were reluctant to reduce the agency profile because of its need to attract supplementary funding.¹⁰

One important political and fiscal development in Latin America with the move to greater democracy has been the tendency to decentralize governance to state, provincial and municipal authorities. This has been attempted several times in different Latin American countries since independence. However, the current wave, which can be traced back to decisions by Brazil in 1988, is seen to decentralize far more power and encourage greater democratic participation in decision making¹¹. This includes policy and budgetary decisions. Has UNICEF been able to adjust to this in order to develop appropriate strategies for leveraging these policies and budgets to the same extent it has been doing this at national level? What are the modalities that UNICEF has used effectively to attain such leverage? These could be managed centrally from the country capital, supported by sub-national offices or outposts or with the use of consultants or staff 'embedded' within government counterpart offices.

For the specific Terms of Reference please see annex 2.

Objectives

⁸ See also UNICEF Board Document E/ICEF/1993/CRP.7, January 1993 (Multi-donor Evaluation Executive Summary) and E/ICEF/1993/CRP.8, January 1993 (the response of the Executive Director).

⁹ MOPAN included Canada, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK

¹⁰ UNICEF Strengths and Weaknesses, UNICEF Evaluation Office, 2004. A summary of key internal and external institutional reviews and evaluations conducted from 1992-2004.

¹¹ See, *inter alia*, Peterson, George E. "Decentralization in Latin America" World Bank Viewpoints, February, 1997.

In order to develop a more coherent approach in decision making on the type of sub-national presence that would best fit needs in different circumstances, this evaluation aims to:

- a) Evaluate the effectiveness and relevance of UNICEF programming at sub-national level;
- b) Examine the efficiency of programming modalities and operational structures;
- c) Recommend criteria for different modalities and structures for sub-national work.

In the Terms of Reference each of the above is then broken down into a series of general and specific questions. These are mainly qualitative and subjective in nature. An attempt was made to add a quantitative and objective dimension by looking at specific transfers of local initiatives, experiences or ideas to a scaled-up or national level, or, indeed, international level. (See Annex 2 for details of the Terms of Reference and the questions)

Methodology

Each of these objectives had a series of general and specific questions laid out as a basis for review.

There were three phases to the evaluation: a desk review, a series of field visits and interviews, and the preparation and presentation of the final report.

The desk review covered the following documentation: draft Country Programme Recommendations, Country Programme Action Plans, Country Programme Management Plans, Mid-Term Reviews, Annual Reports and statistical annexes, as well as other general documentation. These were available for the eight countries specified: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and Peru. Subsequently the consultant also reviewed Bolivia as well as the draft UNICEF Internal Audit report on sub-national offices. This led to a decision to focus on countries with different kinds of modalities for a sub-national presence: Brazil with established Zonal Offices; Argentina operating exclusively from the capital with some previous experience working with an outposted consultant; Peru with both established offices and outposted consultants; Mexico working through implementing partners and with experience of working with a joint UN office; and Nicaragua working through a joint UN office.

In addition, a number of subsequent questions arose from discussions with the Regional Director and his staff as well as with the senior auditor in UNICEF responsible for reviewing the role and function of sub-national offices. These questions included the need to explore the urban question in some depth, the rationale for selecting geographical focus areas, if there is a difference over time between areas of UNICEF focus and other areas, if good indicators have been developed to be able to show what the targets are and the subsequent results.

From the list of countries above, visits were conducted to Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Mexico and Nicaragua. However, in Argentina and Peru the timing of the visit only allowed for discussions with UNICEF staff, and in Argentina with the Resident Coordinator of the UN system. Nevertheless, the visits to the other three countries allowed for sufficient in-depth discussion with counterparts and other non-UNICEF respondents to be able to derive useful conclusions, while the discussions with UNICEF staff in all countries and during the Regional Management Team Meeting in Lima permitted a much clearer vision of expectations from sub-national programming and sub-national presence. The information obtained from the different interviews and discussions was then validated by looking at available data and reviewing articles and publications referring to specific programmes and results.

General findings

The findings that follow are organized according to the three primary objectives. The country contexts are given in greater detail in Annex 1 of this report. The results are very different from country to country and reflect a variety of experience and history as well as expectations of what can come from a sub-national presence. They also reflect different levels of engagement at sub-national level. However, in all cases, the value of sub-national programming that focuses on geographically specific issues within countries was clear. In the three countries where time permitted a deeper dive into the perspectives of counterparts and others the consultant was able to gauge the level of involvement and the influence UNICEF support was having on both policy and practice at the sub-national and the national level.

Looking at the three primary objectives the evaluation found the following:

a) Evaluate the effectiveness and relevance of UNICEF programming at sub-national level;

From the evaluation it has emerged that UNICEF's programming at sub-national level has been both relevant and effective in several countries. It has contributed to addressing major disparities, built capacity to address these and laid the groundwork for and succeeded in systematically influencing policy and practice, mainly at the decentralized level but occasionally also at a national level. The example most written up is the *Bolsa Escola* experience in Brazil. The published articles track it from its origins as an idea within the University of Brasilia under the guidance of Professor Cristovam Buarque, to the influence of the World Bank, the International Labour Organization and UNICEF in highlighting low school enrolment linked to child labour, to its application as a targeted conditional cash transfer to poor families in the Federal District of Brasilia from 1995 when Professor Buarque became its Governor, to its application in other States and throughout Brazil and then to other countries, notably Mexico and Ecuador, its merger with other stipends to become *Bolsa Familia* and how it has been

applied elsewhere in the world¹². UNICEF's role was at an individual level, with discussions between UNICEF's representative in Brazil in the mid-1990s and Professor Buarque on how to translate the ideas into action and then providing institutional support to the programme.

Over many years UNICEF's experience in LAC has given rise to innovative solutions to problems and issues that have been models for national and regional, indeed global emulation. In the 1970s and early 1980s the Early Childhood Development programmes and approaches developed by the Colombian non-Governmental organization CINDE spread to many countries beyond Latin America; in the mid to late 1980s the total approach to immunization pioneered in Colombia that involved not just Health officials but political, civil, and religious leaders also spread rapidly and had a profound global impact. The Brazil experience above has clearly taken a life of its own in a similar way.

The focus of UNICEF's sub-national presence in Latin America and the Caribbean has mainly been to address disparities, emphasizing work with the most disadvantaged and marginalized. Where this focus has remained largely rural and with minority groups, the impact on policy appears to be less although there may be impact on local practice. This approach, though, was mentioned first by most UNICEF staff interviewed and seen as associated with the Equity Agenda of the organization. There was less consideration given to how a new analysis that also looks at where most disadvantaged people are concentrated geographically in a country may impact on decisions regarding priorities, programmes and structures to achieve equity.

However, as mentioned above, some of the work being done has been outstanding. Two specific examples in two countries can be highlighted: The Brazilian Government specifically recognizes the role UNICEF continues to play in creating a bridge between the three different levels of government: municipal, state and federal. In particular it highlights the innovations introduced with UNICEF support in different parts of the country that have been replicated. This includes the *Selo Municipal* and *Bolsa Familia*. UNICEF was not only instrumental in supporting the development of the programmes in the early days as well as its subsequent diffusion and evaluation, it continues to advocate with Governors and Mayors both for improvements and expansion. Both programmes have had remarkable success in reducing poverty, increasing school attendance and results and providing better services; and both started at sub-national level.¹³ A specific remark was that UNICEF was a model of how an agency should work in Brazil and that others should emulate it. Yet each was based on a different approach. *Bolsa Escola* (the precursor of *Bolsa Familia*) was supported from 1995 directly by the UNICEF country office in its initial phases and later supported also by the Zone offices as the programme expanded; the *Selo Municipal* was initiated and piloted in one State

¹² See a) BEST PRACTICES in The State of The World's Children 2004, UNICEF, December 2003; b) Lena Lavinias, The Appeal of Minimum Income Programmes in Latin America, World Bank, 1999; c) De Castro, Vanessa Maria and Marcel Bursztyn, "Social Inclusion or Poverty Alleviation, Lessons from Recent Brazilian Experience" Center for International Development, Harvard University, Working Paper No. 27, December 2008; d) Denes, Christian Andrew, BOLSA ESCOLA: Redefining Poverty and Development in Brazil, International Education Journal, Vol.4, No. 2, 2003

¹³ See, for instance, "Brazil's Bolsa Família: How to get children out of jobs and into school," *The Economist*, 29th July, 2010,

with the involvement and support of the Cear Zone office and later taken up by other Zone offices.

In Mexico, two innovations particularly drew the evaluator’s attention to the impact of UNICEF’s sub-national programming: a specific change of policy in Yucatn State that UNICEF supported and helped foster is the work with judges and magistrates on what they call *medios de externacin*, (to distinguish them from *internacin*, or institutionalizing children in conflict with the law). These alternatives were hailed by the judges and magistrates as transformational in that they have reduced recidivism, and thus reduced the numbers of adolescents they are dealing with and it has transformed the way they themselves look at young people. This has now become a regular feature of training programmes for law students as well as in-service training.

The second innovation is in Chiapas State where UNICEF has been supporting the programme *Todos y todas a la Escuela* since 2003. This programme, from the lengthy external evaluation that was undertaken in 2010, did not appear to have achieved much: less than half of the children identified as being ‘out of school’ were brought back into the school system. Yet, discussing with staff and reviewing progress in the State capital, Tuxtla Gutierrez, much more was revealed as having been achieved, including the development of a powerful database to plan, manage and monitor attendance and performance in schools.

Both the innovations have potential for expansion to other States or through national adoption. Again the modality of operation was different. In Yucatn, UNICEF works through a *socio ejecutor* or implementing partner; while in Chiapas an attempt to do the same did not work and UNICEF has a staff member based in the State as part of a joint UN office. However, in both States the work of UNICEF is recognized by the State authorities as having profoundly influenced their policies and practice.

It is clear from both these country examples that programming at sub-national level can be both effective and highly relevant as they influence government policies and practice at the sub-national level and have the potential to influence national policy.

A third example that is somewhat different is the *Creceer* programme in Peru, which is primarily a national nutrition programme. Its origins come from the successful *Buen Inicio* programme in the southern Andes that evolved under the UNICEF regional PROANDES programme. The difference is that, as with the *Bolsa Escola* in Brazil, UNICEF’s initial sub-national programming input in the 1990s came directly from the country office in Lima. Zonal offices were established as late as 2006.

All three examples evolved in very different ways. The capacity of local counterparts proved very important in all cases. Where a local office was established it usually worked well with the local authorities as well as civil society. Where a local office could not be established, in Yucatn, the ability to find a motivated and competent implementing partner proved vital. In no case were the results immediately evident and took a number of years to spread to other

geographical areas and nationally. Also apparent was that even with a sub-national presence or implementing partner the role of the country office remained crucial.

In Argentina, the UNICEF country office was assessing how to best address the disparities it was seeing between provinces. It felt there must be a way to see greater progress for disadvantaged population groups than it was obtaining by signing agreements with provinces and monitoring these from the capital or through field visits. The possibility of a joint UN programme office exists and may be worth further analysis.

In Nicaragua UNICEF was well regarded in its support for the autonomous regional structures along the Caribbean coast. The joint UN office provides a useful base of operations for a number of projects although the experience is relatively recent and it is too early to assess impact.

In summary, although different operational structures were deployed, the presence of UNICEF at sub-national level in four of the five countries has proven to be welcomed by local authorities and effective in three of the countries when linked to upstream processes at the State, Regional or National and Federal level.

b) Examine the efficiency of programming modalities and operational structures;

As part of the Preliminary Summary of the UNICEF Internal Audit on the management of Zone offices, the author highlighted a number of alternatives available to setting up formal zone offices.¹⁴ These included:

- a) the use of consultants based on different locations (either individual or institutional)
- b) partnerships with NGOs who would effectively undertake and monitor UNICEF activities in remote areas
- c) staff members actually contracted by another UN Agency but supervised by UNICEF staff at the country office
- d) technical advisors embedded in local government departments
- e) technical advisors deployed on long-term missions to the field and working closely with local partners
- f) joint UN presence initiatives which allowed UNICEF staff to temporarily work from other UN agency bases

For the purposes of this evaluation the following modalities were reviewed:

Brazil: zone offices in Fortaleza and Rio de Janeiro, as a sample of the several UNICEF zone offices in Brazil. The Brazil Country Programme has three 'platforms': Semi-Arid, Amazon Region and Urban. The Fortaleza office is part of the Semi-Arid Platform. It has been well established for over 20 years, but has remained small with 8 staff and is managed by a National Officer with support from Programme Specialists in the zone office and a Focal Point in the

¹⁴ Preliminary Summary of Observations on an Audit of the Management of Zone Offices, UNICEF, Office of Internal Audit, January 2011, page 11

Country Office. The Rio office is part of the Urban Platform. There has been an office in the city for several decades, but this was exclusively dedicated to printing and selling greeting cards and later private sector fundraising. This changed in 2006 and the office took on a programming function as part of the new urban platform. The office is managed by a senior National Officer with the support of a programme specialist and a focal point in the country office.

Argentina: All programming has been managed directly from the country office. This is based on a series of “conventions” signed with Provincial authorities for specific work to be supported by UNICEF. It requires frequent travel, over long distances. UNICEF has one experience of a consultant working at sub-national level;

Peru: Programming is managed from the country office and the office has hired consultants and works with local leaders to improve programme understanding and performance. UNICEF does have four zone offices, outposted staff and consultants around the country and the Government has also requested additional support.

Mexico: The country office has experience of working through implementing partners in seven States. This has been successful in some but not in others. In Yucatán the office works through an implementing partner; in Chiapas there were problems with that modality and now work with an outposted staff member as part of a joint UN office.

Nicaragua: The country office manages sub-national programming directly. However, it is part of a joint UN programme in the two autonomous Atlantic regions of the country and has recently posted a staff member to the joint UN office in Bilwi in the North Atlantic Autonomous Region.

In addition there were discussions on the sub-contracting of programming in Bolivia. This will be discussed in further detail later.

In Brazil it is evident that The *Selo* initiative, which the Fortaleza office has been engaged with from the start, focuses on the Semi-Arid North East of the country, has expanded from the State of Ceará to eleven States and is credited with increasing coverage of major vaccination and other health and nutrition interventions, education and water and sanitation as well as improving the quality of services at Municipal level. It is based on the idea of competition between municipalities with maximum participation by communities. A sample of achievements shows that the proportion of undernourished children halved in the over 1,000 municipalities enrolled in the previous “edition” of the programme; the reduction in the infant mortality rate was five times greater than the national average: a 15% reduction in the period 2004-6 compared to 3% for the whole of Brazil¹⁵. Although the *Selo* cannot be uniquely responsible for this progress it has certainly contributed to these improvements. In 2007 UNICEF, Brazil published a document which compared results from municipalities in the Semi-

¹⁵ See UNICEF Brazil’s Annual Report 2009, p70.

Arid region with the rest of the country and also compared municipalities within the region.¹⁶ The section on infant mortality looks at 2004 data (page 25) and shows that the ratio was still worse than in the rest of the country. In the current “edition” of the programme nearly 1,300 out of a total of 1,519 municipalities are enrolled, or just over 80% of municipalities in the Semi-Arid region of the country. **The zone office modality** has certainly leveraged its resources very effectively.

In summary, the key factors regarding UNICEF’s role in this success are a) a well established and well functioning office in Fortaleza that could drive the idea of a competition between municipalities with full public participation and a strong component of advocacy, communication and technical assistance; b) a long history of excellent rapport with government and civil society counterparts; and c) a remarkably strong UNICEF brand image in the country, standing for independence and credibility which motivated mayors to embrace the *Selo*.

In Yucatán, Mexico the benefits of results are more restricted to the State itself. The new Juvenile Justice system has been operating for nearly three years. Although an evaluation is due this year (2011) early results include changes in the law that have already been passed and the establishment of a separate juvenile bench. The training and certification of magistrates and lawyers has been proceeding rapidly and the magistrature itself perceives a reduction in juvenile recidivism, albeit unquantifiable as yet. Although this is part of a federal programme on Juvenile Justice, the training and certification programme developed in Yucatán is distinct and has the potential for influencing other States. The UNICEF modality of working through an **implementing partner** has worked very well here and shown the importance of an understanding of the local reality and having credibility as well as the need for regular contact between the country office and the partner organization.

In summary, this is an effective and successful modality which is cost effective in that the implementing partner can mobilize far more people than UNICEF would be able to do if there were an office in Mérida. The partner agency which provides technical assistance has 37 staff. UNICEF supervises and monitors regularly through telephone calls and visits which are as important. It also provides a basis for sustainable action and the partner agency also has the potential of working in several other States.

In Chiapas, Mexico UNICEF has been supporting the Education Programme *Todos los niños en la Escuela* since 2003. Chiapas is one of five States where this has been implemented. In 2010 an evaluation showed that whereas the States of Guerrero, Oaxaca and Zacatecas succeeded in getting the vast majority of identified out-of-school children into school (65%, 72% and 100% respectively), Chiapas only managed 38% and Yucatán 34%.¹⁷ Yet the results were far more spectacular in Chiapas. Initially the programme had started in the municipality of Tuxtla Gutierrez and has now expanded throughout the State. The former mayor of Tuxtla has been the State Governor for the last five years and personally oversaw the expansion. The

¹⁶ See UNICEF, Brazil “Crianças e Adolescentes: situação no Semi-árido Brasileira”, 2007

¹⁷ See Politeia 2010; Sistematización de la Iniciativa “Todos Los Niños en la Escuela” Executive Summary, p11.

collaboration between the Civil Registry, the State Education authorities and DIF has led to the development of a unique database that does not just record registration and whether children are in school or not, but can also track performance for each child. Thus, in Chiapas, one of the weaknesses of the overall programme identified by the evaluation (the lack of follow up post registration in school) was directly addressed with a model potentially applicable in all States. Initially the programme was being followed through and monitored by an implementing partner. As the evaluation showed, this failed. **The posting of a UNICEF staff member through the joint UN office** in San Cristobal de las Casas seems to have worked well. This approach is well accepted by counterparts and, along with regular visits by specialist staff from the UNICEF country office, this approach has not just put the Education programme back on track but has supported innovative solutions that provide the scope for positive changes at national level.

In summary, there was a quick realization that UNICEF needed to provide direct technical assistance rather than rely on an implementing partner. The joint UN offices provide a base of operations, although the State government would also be willing to provide office space. Quality assurance is provided by regular visits of technical staff from the UNICEF country office. It is possible that actions will be mainstreamed into national policy over time.

In Argentina, with a concern for the situation of children in the poorest North Eastern and North Western provinces which have shown negative trends in their social indicators, the country office is itself dissatisfied with its current mode of support based on a series of agreements with Provincial authorities and regular visits to different provinces by country office staff. The office is looking for ways to increase **cooperation with state and non-state agencies as well as agreements among UN agencies** to address this. The office recognizes that interaction with some of these provinces has been a challenge.¹⁸ In the decentralized setting in Argentina, Provincial Governors are autonomous and make their own decisions regarding investments in the social sectors. Provincial disparities are stark: The infant mortality rate in Formosa is over 19 per mil compared to a national average of 12.5 per mil. Neonatal mortality represents 50 per cent of the burden¹⁹. The desire to find a way to address disparities is felt by the UN resident coordinator's office. As an option, it is suggested to assess the idea of a joint UN programme office to provide technical assistance and a monitoring base in the North of the country at the same time as addressing the needs of the disadvantaged in the more populous Buenos Aires province which is also a pole of attraction for migrants from the North as well as Paraguay and Bolivia.

In summary, there needs to be a reassessment of how UNICEF and the UN can best address disparities and promote an Equity agenda in Argentina.

¹⁸ See UNICEF Argentina Annual Report 2009, pp 9-10.

¹⁹ see UNDP Argentina; Informe Nacional sobre Desarrollo Humano, 2010, table A3.4, p145).

In Peru, despite being on track for MDG 4 (Child Mortality) and having a remarkably effective immunization programme with national coverage rates approaching 100 per cent²⁰, poor scholastic performance is specifically linked to the absence of bilingual and multicultural education.²¹ Successive Annual Reports show the Andean regions of Cusco, Apurimac and Ayacucho having the poorest social indicators for children, along with Loreto in the Amazon. However, UNICEF has been working in the Andean region for at least 30 years and **has had zone offices in the region since 2006**; in Cusco, Ayacucho and Abancay. It begs the question why has there not been greater impact. Although the evaluator did not seek specific reasons for this, experience with the PROANDES programme in the 1990s and reading the more recent reports suggests three clear possible answers:

- a) There have been intermittent and sometimes longer term political and security issues that have slowed the possibility of rapid empowerment and integration of Andean communities;
- b) although there were clear programme inputs and capacity building for governmental structures included in successive plans, there were no clear and quantified results frameworks established and those counterpart individuals who benefited were often subject to deployment away from the area of focus;

and linked to the above

- c) there was never an exit strategy (which should have been linked to the results). The UNICEF Representative to Peru has stated that there should be a reassessment and perhaps an office opened in addition to or instead of one or more of the current offices in order to cover the poorest region of the southern Andes, with nearly 5 per cent of the country's population. The evaluator agrees with the Representative that a reassessment is needed. However, the Ventanilla modality of **engaging consultants** to provide technical assistance and to be the primary interface with communities seems to be working well with a high level of acceptance of the local consultants.

In summary, the programme environment in the Andes has not always been conducive to a high level of engagement and security issues in some areas have interrupted regular monitoring. At the same time there were weak mechanisms for systematic follow up. Nevertheless, the modality of engaging and placing consultants seems to have worked well.

Bolivian data show a situation where the primary geographical areas of focus do not seem to be catching up with the rest of the country despite the additional resources. The Countdown to 2015 report profile for Bolivia shows rapid reduction of under-five mortality between 2000 and 2009 and national immunization rates also stabilizing at about 95%. Yet the most recent Global Study on Poverty and Disparity shows that the Andean departments of Potosi, Chuquisaca, Oruro and Cochabamba all have levels of malnutrition significantly higher and often more than

²⁰ see WHO/UNICEF Countdown to 2015: Decade Report 2000-2010, country profile for Peru

²¹ see e.g. UNICEF Peru Annual Report 2009, p 4

double the rest of the country.²² As in Peru, UNICEF has worked in the poorest regions of the country, Northern Potosi and Southern Cochabamba, for over 25 years. Since 2003 UNICEF interventions have focused on 50 municipalities (there are 327). Of the focus municipalities, 29 were in the Andes and 21 in the lowlands of the Amazon and Chaco. UNICEF supported an integrated programming methodology and the development of five-year plans. It also had an exit strategy based on the following defined criteria: a) minimum service coverage to represent a critical mass for developing the model and the necessary institutional and technical capacity for future replication in other communities within the municipality; b) the technical capacity of municipal government and local services to take action; c) Municipal governments' financial capacity to support actions. Between 2003 and 2007 UNICEF provided 60 per cent of the financing while municipalities contributed 35 per cent and prefectures 5 per cent. In 2010 UNICEF Bolivia conducted an analysis of this Local Development Strategy as part of its review of the current programme cycle, 2008-12. The above information is drawn from it²³. It also showed that geographical priority was made through a process of "historical inertia" (p64), with no real incentive to graduate and indeterminate impact. The report clearly indicated that the model had serious weaknesses despite having six teams assigned to follow through.

In summary, there does not appear to have been a clear incentive to graduate from being a UNICEF focus municipality and that the modality of **outsourcing technical assistance** does not seem to have provided better results than the UNICEF **zone office in Cochabamba** in terms of helping communities in the poorest departments catch up with the rest of the country. Nevertheless, the high level of access to services at the time of nationwide health campaigns has led to major improvements in child survival rates

In Nicaragua, it is too early to assess the specific results for the work in the RAAN and RAAS regions of the Caribbean coast. The problems in the area were clearly highlighted in the Annual Report 2008 (Country Situation) on the basis of the study of child poverty and disparity, and the programme was subsequently reoriented to address this. The current model's strength is in that the **staff member assigned to be based in the UN office** in Bilwi is knowledgeable about the local situation with a high level of technical capacity and well attuned to the political sensitivities. From the meetings attended with him, both in Managua and Bilwi, he adds to the image of UNICEF as a credible and independent partner. Its weakness is that the UN office is dependent currently on MDG funding from Spain. This is due to finish in 2012 and there is no assurance of continuity. The government supports both the joint UN office and UNICEF's presence but UNICEF's engagement should be time-limited in order to ensure access to services across sectors for the local communities. So far this is partially done for Water and for Health.

In summary, UNICEF is fulfilling a key role by assigning a staff member to work out of a joint UN office. The modality is working in that there is closer follow up of progress in both the provision of and access to services. There is still monitoring and supervision from the country office. This

²² see UDAPE/UNICEF 2011, Reporte Nacional Bolivia, figure 42, p67.

²³ Análisis de la Estrategia de Desarrollo Local en el marco del Programa de País 2008-2012, UNICEF Bolivia, 2010, page 12

is possibly a limited time solution to enable these two autonomous regions to catch up with the rest of the country where UNICEF support for municipalities is assured directly by the country office.

The above are examples based on the evaluator's reading and inquiry. It became clear during the course of this research that there was no evidence of a systematic analysis of the best modality for a particular programming need. The closest two examples are probably from Brazil and Bolivia.

The example of the Urban Platform in Brazil, which will be described later, and the decision to convert the existing office in Rio de Janeiro into a programme office to support the need for intense local planning, programming, negotiation and monitoring and advocacy. The Bolivian example above was based on an analysis of how to support the poorest municipalities but created indicators that were vague or open to interpretation and decisions on focus municipalities based on "historical inertia." Only Bolivia had developed an exit strategy, although it was not tracked or implemented.

The Country Programme Management Plans do not undertake an assessment of options for addressing sub-national programming issues, nor which of a range of modalities may be the best approach, along with a cost analysis of alternatives.

This will be addressed in the section on Recommendations.

The following table shows the different modalities reviewed above.

Table 1.

Country	Modality	Success	Challenge
Brazil <i>Selo</i>	Zone Office	reduction in mortality, rapid expansion,	How to transfer to partners and exit strategy
Mexico 1 <i>Juvenile Justice</i>	Implementing Partner	change of law and practice	How to expand to other States
Mexico 2 <i>Getting children into school</i>	Outposted staff in UN office	Integrated system of Registry, Welfare and Education	How to expand to other States and ensure mainstreaming
Argentina <i>The North</i>	Country office only	Realizing a special focus needed	Developing strategy
Peru <i>S Andes</i>	Zone office or consultant	Access to national campaigns	Success criteria
Bolivia <i>The Poorest</i>	Outsourced TA	Access to national campaigns	Monitor and act on results
Nicaragua <i>Caribbean</i>	Outposted staff in UN office	Catch up for Water and Health	Success criteria

c) Recommend criteria for different modalities and structures for sub-national work.

A similar evaluation in another UNICEF region has created a series of criteria for different modalities. In his report in UNICEF's East Asia and Pacific Region in 2006, Woodhouse suggested a series of criteria to be used in determining whether to set up a sub-office or not, and if yes, the type of office.²⁴ A full listing of the EAPRO criteria and recommendations can be found in Annex 4 of this document. The following is a summary of the EAPRO criteria that appeared in the Preliminary Summary Audit Document:²⁵

- i) The state of development of the country
- ii) The degree of decentralization of fiscal and political government
- iii) The degree of decentralization of civil society and other partners

²⁴ Woodhouse, Stephen J. "An Inquiry into UNICEF's Sub-National Structures and Functioning in the East Asia & Pacific Region, UNICEF Bangkok, September 2006

²⁵ Preliminary Summary of Observations on an Audit of the Management of Zone Offices, UNICEF, Office of Internal Audit, January 2011, page 9.

- iv) The existence of significant internal disparities within a country
- v) The size of a country and logistical issues
- vi) The marginal cost or savings involved in having a sub-national presence
- vii) The interests of donors in a sub-national presence
- viii) The attitude of government to a UNICEF sub-national presence
- ix) Security concerns
- x) The degree of decentralization of other UN agencies

The Audit Document also provides criteria and guidance on when and why to establish a zone office. This is reproduced in Annex 5 of this report.

Taking the two reports cited above into account, there are three overriding recommendations based on the visits to the five countries, as well as reading the documentation from Panama, Ecuador, Colombia and Bolivia.

- 1) **In an environment where planning and budgets have been decentralized, primarily to municipal level, sub-national programming is essential.** This does not automatically mean the need for a fixed presence of UNICEF, but it does need to be based on a clear rationale linked to local capacity development, and the national capacity to ensure that any changes needed can occur. Selecting the poorest municipalities, those with highest mortality rates or lowest levels of school attendance could be methods used. For example, Argentina is looking to operate that way. Within a national programming context these municipalities do not have to be contiguous or clustered, although they often are. Indeed, there is something to be said for the **twinning** of more successful municipalities with less successful ones, as suggested by the mayors in Ceará State in Brazil. The key, though, is to determine what needs changing in order to impact on results and ask the question if the results at sub-national level can also influence policy and practice nationally. This means that as well as determining which municipalities may need extra focus, also determining the strategy for a) working with and empowering local communities and civil society; b) building local capacity of both government and civil society; and c) bringing results to the attention of Regional and National authorities. This does not necessarily need a permanent presence at sub-national level, although it may be the best solution. The Representative in Brazil pointed out that the Fortaleza zone office covers three States and that the *Bolsa Escolar* programme was primarily supported from the country office. The Bolivia analysis spoke of “historical inertia” in the selection of municipalities of focus, and the inability to move from ways of working set earlier. Care needs to be taken that when selecting the municipalities for focused support, the country programme management plan assesses the most effective means for achieving programme objectives.
- 2) **The setting of clear goals within a determined time-frame is important.** This should not only be part of the country programme but may need to operate on a separate timeline too to coincide with national plans of longer duration. Currently, to support countries

achieving the MDGs the year 2015 is a natural end point for short term planning. It becomes important to assess if good results in the selected municipalities with high disparities will positively influence national data. This will require an earlier assessment of what is needed for the country to achieve the MDGs. In applying principles of Equity, it is important to examine how access to goods and services can be ensured for the disadvantaged and marginalized. An inclusive approach would ensure that such an examination would encompass disadvantaged groups, such as Indigenous populations or Afro-Latinos, especially when associated with specific and often isolated geographical locations as well as the same population groups and others when affected by the economic and social push and pull factors that lead to migration both within a country and to other countries. A good example of prioritization of programmes is in the development of the three Platforms in Brazil: the Semi-Arid region was where municipal indicators were historically below the national average and it is home to a sizeable population; the Urban areas of Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro are home to many millions of poor people living in thousands of marginal communities; and the Amazon region, is home to dispersed marginal and difficult to reach, often indigenous populations, who, while not making up a large proportion of the population, do require a 'voice' to support them accessing services and goods.

- 3) There is no single modality to be recommended for establishing a UNICEF presence at sub-national level. However, the example of the **local Implementing Partner** as a UNICEF presence needs to be explored further. It may not work everywhere as well as the example of IEPAAC in Yucatán, Mexico that is cited above as that was also based on the development of a relationship between UNICEF and IEPAAC over many years. However, this approach offers a clear path **towards local ownership and sustainability** and offers a better route than through individual consultancies or sub-contracting, as in the case of Bolivia. Working with and through such a partner can also provide the leverage needed when resources are limited. IEPAAC in Yucatán, for instance, employs 37 staff, something UNICEF would never be able to do. Is this a model that can be explored elsewhere? Even where there is an established office which has continuously adapted and produced innovations and good results, such as the Fortaleza zone office, there will be scope to evolve local ownership and sustainability much as the *Selo* programme is doing.

However, working through Implementing Partners is certainly a more attractive option in terms of creating a sustainable longer term support than the UN Houses at sub-national level that the consultant visited in San Cristobal, Mexico and Bilwi, Nicaragua. The latter are currently primarily short term opportunities for UNICEF to have a physical presence without setting up an office of its own, although in both locations the local authorities have been willing to provide space for a UNICEF staff member. The UN houses do offer a basis for concentrated joint programming, but this is largely dependent on the external financing not just of UNICEF but other agencies too. The UN Houses at sub-national level may be temporary solutions or UNDP may try to extend by expanding the reliance on other agencies to co-pay and/or persuading State or

Provincial governments to finance²⁶. This is only desirable if the purpose is to achieve well articulated programmatic results or to build the local capacity to do so.

Where an Implementing Partner is not an option there is much to be said for out posting between two to five individuals, preferably as staff members, as in Bilwi, depending on the programme areas to be covered. This should not necessarily constitute a zone office but should be recognized by UNICEF as a new type of presence. The links with the country office will remain, as will frequent travel. The purpose has to remain programmatic in a given time-frame.

Finally, the quality of UNICEF and implementing partner staff that the evaluator met and are operating at sub-national level is very high. This speaks to good assessment of needs and development of terms of reference for the work to be done. Only some of the work carried out by these staff filters through to be recorded in country office reporting, mainly the highlights. While initially surprising to the evaluator, given the high demand for reports of different kinds within UNICEF, it was apparent that most had to be kept to specific formats and were not designed to widely disseminate the ‘stories’ or learnings from sub-national pilots and other experiences. Yet there is a rich set of data that is invariably kept and would provide excellent source material for further analysis. This material is actively used for fundraising purposes. Country leadership seems to have made good recruitment an essential step for successful programming. This has allowed for limited numbers of people to undertake large amounts of work and achieve results.

Table 2. Some issues relating to selection of modality of sub-national presence

Sub-national Modality	Determinants	Key Issues
Zone Office	Country size, history, focus area	Success/failure criteria, exit
Local Implementing Partner	Local credibility, capacity	Autonomy,
Posting staff to joint UN office	Existence of office, funding	Funding, project durability
Field visits to plan/monitor	Agreements, indicators	Distance, credibility
Engaging consultants	Credibility, access	QA and supervision
Outsourcing Tech. Assistance	Critical mass, competence	QA and supervision

In the above table the column “Determinants” shows the factors that help decide the appropriate modality; the column “Key Issues” presents impeding factors based on the evaluator’s findings. Thus, for the Zone office modality, the absence of clear indicators for success (or failure), or, indeed, any exit criteria make managerial decisions on continuity difficult. For a local Implementing Partner, a demand for greater autonomy of action can lead to a divergence of views and practice away from the agreements with UNICEF. The UN office modality will always be limited by the funding available for it and the life of the projects it was set up to support. UNICEF staff field visits from the capital will be limited in number the further the distance or the longer the time needed to reach a given area, leading to a reduced visibility

²⁶ This statement is based on the discussion with the UN Resident Coordinator in Nicaragua

and credibility for the organization. Outsourcing to individuals or consulting firms will always require clear quality assurance (QA) and supervision from UNICEF staff.

General Conclusion

For UNICEF in Latin America sub-national programming through different programme modalities and types of presence has become ever more important as more and more countries decentralize their systems of planning, decision making and resource allocation to different levels of governance. There are ways of working with that at national level that have not been much explored. National or State/Provincial training programmes and annual meetings for mayors or municipal staff serve as potential entry points for introducing ideas and practices of interest to UNICEF. This would help address the issue of frequent changes of officials and counterparts as they could become regular venues for information sharing. Yet country offices are also urged to apply the Equity agenda countrywide. This entails choices and this evaluator believes that these choices of emphasis need to be continuously re-assessed. As pointed out in the Findings above, UNICEF Representatives need to look at overall need in the country first, through their office Situation Analysis or periodic reviews, before referring to specific population groups. At the same time, opportunities emerge which create an improved environment for children (as is the Juvenile Justice programme in Yucatán). As priorities shift it has been difficult historically to not continue with what has gone before. Therefore, few zone offices have been closed. For some the approach has been to expand zone offices in order to address new identified gaps, rather than to prioritize. There has also been little thought given to how long a sub-national presence should stay and what indicators to use to determine success or failure. In the current administrative environment of decentralization it should be mandatory to set not just programme goals but specific outcomes and outputs to be achieved and their time frames for all proposals to open or continue with any sub-national presence. Country offices should be continuously assessing the situation of children and evaluating whether the type of presence or engagement, whether based locally or nationally, is appropriate and achieving the desired results. This should be linked to a clear exit strategy against the time frame set for any type of sub-national engagement. This will allow for a clearer assessment of the need for a presence and the kind of presence needed. The impact of sub-national work on policy at State and National level has always been a feature of the role of sub-offices in Brazil and continues to be so. The potential for such influence at national level was also clearly seen in Mexico. In Nicaragua the need is political; to redress past imbalances in society. In that sense the presence is a sensible response to an identified need but should be within a limited time frame and with objectives that are clearly articulated in terms of access to public goods and services.

There will be a continuing need for a sub-national presence in many places but it needs a clearer programmatic formula for decision making as it can also divert attention from where children are suffering vulnerability and distress in the greatest numbers. The evaluator has attempted to provide such a process chart for decision making (see pages 34 and 35).

Specific Conclusions:

In the following section, the specific conclusions of the evaluation will be presented.

- 1) Are the UNICEF programmes with sub-national focus achieving results for children and women within the context of the defined country programmes and addressing the UNICEF role in middle income countries?

Examples have been given above of two countries, Brazil and Mexico, where results are clear and positive and very much in the context of the country programme. In Brazil, the Government recognizes the role of UNICEF in supporting innovation in States and in creating a functioning bridge between the Municipal, State and Federal levels of Government. The two specific initiatives mentioned, *Bolsa Familia* and *Selo Municipal*, started in one or two States but over time have been taken up by many states and even federally. These are certainly within the context of the six core minimum roles for UNICEF in Middle Income Countries as summarized on page 3 above. They are repeated here in full:

- Support monitoring of children's and women's rights, including through support to ongoing Situation Analysis and child-focused research, and increase awareness of duty-bearers and among rights-holders of data and evidence on these rights, including key trends and disparities;
- Strengthen national and local capacities in key institutions and public sector and/or civil society organizations promoting children's rights – including, at a minimum, for national CRC and CEDAW monitoring and reporting, and for child-focused disaster preparedness and response;
- Advocate for pro-child and gendered policies, laws and/or budgets that lead to an enabling environment for children and women, and influence national planning processes to ensure policy translate into measurable progress for the most disadvantaged families and children;
- Promote and enhance partnerships for children, including with national and local government, private sector and civil society/ young people's organizations, to facilitate and strengthen social dialogue with the participation of rights-holders; to leverage resources for investments in children's rights; and to address critical challenges and disparities;
- Promote and support attention to major issues of disparities, exclusion and discrimination at national and subnational levels, including failures to protect children; and on the basis of situation analysis, evidence and CRC principles, advocate for national strategies and measures to eradicate disparities and sources of exclusion and discrimination. This role may also include the supporting of pilot innovations to address such issues, where resources are available;
- Facilitate the documentation and evaluation of experience and exchange of knowledge and information on children's rights between MICOs and other countries (including

regional and South-South knowledge-sharing, and also with OECD countries) and provide advice on global normative standards concerning children.

The potential entry points for this are:

- Innovations (including implementation of pilot approaches);
- Awareness and dissemination of the situation of children among key stakeholders at the sub-national level in a simple and attractive way to create demand;
- Flexibility to adapt quickly to the programming environment and local conditions;
- technical knowledge to leverage the increase in availability of and access to quality goods and services;

A focus on creating or enhancing systems that quickly join mainstream actions and can impact policy, are sustainable and allow UNICEF to step back and exit from sub-national specific action.

While within the context of national programming, three of the six roles underline work on local capacity strengthening, enhanced partnerships with local government, private sector and civil society and young people's organization, and focusing on disparities, exclusion and discrimination at sub-national level. These are considered part of the core roles for regular country programming design. There is also a specific recommendation to 'reduce or eliminate "downstream" interventions taking place in limited locations in countries with little or no wider impact for children's rights or knowledge generation,but (investing more in) the continuing scope for programme support to pilot innovations that are rigourously designed for learning purposes to inform wider policy and programming, where resources are adequate to support such piloting.'²⁷

This seems to provide a clear context for the minimum programming work needed. The sub-national examples from Brazil and Mexico cited above are completely aligned with the core roles and achieving results for children. However, based on UNICEF's experience in the countries visited by the evaluator there is a need to build trust at sub-national level before being able to engage in productive discussions for change in laws, policy, or practice. This trust building can take the form of frequent visits or a local presence.

²⁷ UNICEF's Approach in Middle Income Countries – Six Core Strategic Roles, Division of Policy and Practice, May 2010. Discussion Paper by Richard Morgan and Robert Jenkins, page5

2) How is UNICEF approaching local stake-holders?

In all the above examples activities are being carried out in the context of a decentralization of decision making and budgets to State/Provincial and/or Municipal levels. In Peru and Nicaragua the Government specifically requested UNICEF to open offices in Iquitos and Bilwi respectively. In Argentina, UNICEF is working with other UN partners to establish the right dialogue to be able to concentrate more on areas that should have greater focus. In the other countries UNICEF has a long history of intervention and has developed strong relationships with governmental and civil society partners. Mexico is slightly different in that it is more of a “centralized federation” where the relationship with the State and civil society partners has evolved to monitor and/or implement activities. The building of capacity and transfer of authority over time seems to have emerged as a strong component of the Brazil and Mexico examples, whether to local government authorities or to local non-governmental organizations. The experiences with Mayors in Ceará, Brazil, with the NGO IEPAAC in Yucatán and with DIF in Chiapas, Mexico, are all good examples of this. It was the stated intention in Bolivia too, but this does not appear to have happened, as is clear from the previous section (see page 12 above). In Argentina, the 2009 Annual Report shows that there is concern from within the country that some key national institutions cannot produce acceptable data (see p7, note 5). In Ventanilla, Peru, an urban area on the outskirts of Lima and in Bilwi the focus has been on staff working with local leaders.

From the above, systematic work and capacity building with local authorities seems to pay off well in terms of programmatic results. In the example of Ceará, Brazil, the work with the mayors has been complemented by a very strong engagement with, empowerment of, and participation of the local populations within the *Selo* programme. This has allowed both the relationships and the tasks to develop and be accomplished. Mexico and Argentina experiences have focused on task accomplishment and while in the former local relationships have also evolved in the examples cited, in the latter the UNICEF office is concerned that poor or weak relationships are impeding progress. In Peru there has been much emphasis on relationship building with local leaders and officials while programming has essentially been retained by the country office. In Nicaragua good relationships had already been established with local leaders and the focus now is on developing a task orientation.

3) What are the different programme modalities for achieving results for children and women at the sub-national level in Latin America and the Caribbean? What type of presence works in what context?

In all cases reviewed the sub-national activities were an integral part of the country programme and reflected a response to an identified problem in the situation analysis or, mid-course, in a particular review document. In almost all cases they also reflected a national decision to decentralize, although that was generally opportunistic rather than deliberate. UNICEF has had activities and a presence in Ceará State, Brazil for over 20 years. The North-East (Semi-Arid) region of Brazil has continuously been the poorest and most deprived region of the country.

The government decision to decentralize dates from 1988 although it has been implemented gradually. Similarly UNICEF has been working in the poorest parts of the Andes regions of Peru and Bolivia for well over 20 years. The UNICEF sub-regional programme, PROANDES (including Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela) was started in 1989 with support from the Inter-American Development Bank and Spain but national decisions to decentralize date from the mid to late 1990s. As part of PROANDES, UNICEF opened zone offices in Cochabamba, Bolivia and, much later, in several towns in Southern Peru. These offices are still operating although PROANDES no longer provides regional support. The zone offices built up local credibility by delivering services locally (primarily potable water and education services) and leveraged this to bring in both other providers and financial sources, notably Social Investment Funds, as well as used acquired credibility to create a demand for national services that were being offered but minimally used. Examples of the latter are for health (immunization, as reported earlier) and nutrition (iodized salt). Viewed in this way the zone offices have had a remarkable success. However, without time frames or transition or exit criteria it becomes difficult to see how the role can evolve. What is known is that many of the same municipalities that were the poorest 30 years ago are still the poorest today even if some of the social indicators of access and coverage have improved considerably. This is a paradox that will need to be addressed.

In Argentina, the dual approach of signing specific agreements on activities with provincial leaders and fielding specific regular missions from the capital has been the primary modality, but with results that have not satisfied the country office. In Nicaragua, the office has been trying to focus on the municipalities with the greatest needs. This includes the Caribbean coast which is also the focus of a joint UN action. In Peru, from a reading of the reports, the approach appears to have been primarily the local monitoring and implementation of national programmes with the presence required mainly for reasons of logistics.

In Mexico the Implementing Partner modality seems to have worked very effectively in the Education programmes in three of the five States participating. In a fourth, Yucatán, it seems to have worked better with the Juvenile Justice Programme and with another programme not discussed in this report, Emergency Preparedness (based on work with Mayan communities confronting hurricanes and flooding). In the fifth, Chiapas, the modality did not work and a staff member was assigned, based in a joint UN office. This led to a rapid rebuilding of relationships and focus on task accomplishment.

In summary, the regular modality when there is no sub-national presence is for **regular missions to be fielded from the country office** to undertake quality assurance, monitoring and supervisory missions. This works well in smaller countries with easy access to all parts of the country. It works less well in larger countries with significant populations and a decentralized system of governance when an alternative may be needed in addition to the regular modality.

Zone offices were established to enable better and more regular communications between priority areas of a country and the country office. They work well when there is a discrete set of actions to be undertaken in a defined geographical area for a specific period of two programme

cycles of 5 years, or longer. The administration and cost required for setting one up means that for lesser periods alternatives may be needed.

A **local implementing Partner** modality relies on the availability of a partner with the shared values, capacity and competence to undertake the work. It can be for a shorter or longer period and offers an alternative to a zone office when the government or costs do not allow that option; and it can be in addition to a zone office to ensure a continuity of action when the latter is winding down or exiting. It also offers a quick solution for a temporary need to build capacity or concentrate attention in a defined geographical area.

The option of **outposting** one or more staff members should always be considered. In the examples evaluated this has only occurred in the context of the presence of a **joint UN office**. Where such an office exists, or could be opened, it is a preferred alternative to setting up a stand-alone UNICEF zone office. However, programme priorities and goals should be aligned and there should still be a time-limited period of operation. The administrative possibility of outposting to be based in a local government department should be explored by UNICEF. This would require explicit programmatic terms of reference.

The option of **engaging consultants** to be outposted to local government departments or other counterparts has been used when this kind of direct technical assistance is needed. This circumvents administrative, cost and time barriers to outposting a staff member but does not necessarily or systematically build institutional capacity in counterparts or in UNICEF and requires regular and systematic follow up from the country office in terms of monitoring, supervision and quality assurance. It is, therefore, preferable to use this option for short term technical assistance.

Outsourcing technical assistance to companies or consortia should only be considered if such capacity already exists in a country and has a proven track record. In that case there is a need for highly detailed and specified contracts with clear time-bound objectives and targets. This should be viewed as specialist assistance fully supervised by the country office and not be used instead of staff work.

- 4) What are the different types of sub-national presence that UNICEF has in place and for what purpose?

The different types of presence often reflected a history within the country. The zone offices in Brazil are distinct offices staffed by senior national staff serving several States. The newest office in programme terms is the Rio de Janeiro office which has been expanded to service primarily the city of Rio (although it does also cover the States of Rio and Espiritu Santu). This office was expanded by adding the programme function in premises previously used for the Greeting Card operation and fund raising. However, in Brazil there is a mature functioning

network involving staff in the Capital and those in the different zone offices who work together with each other, federal and local authorities to ensure an alignment with national and local priorities as well as appropriate planning and monitoring. Most recently the country office developed a Platform approach to programming with three platforms: the Semi-Arid, which has traditionally been the primary focus of UNICEF attention; the Amazon, and the Urban. This is a new and important addition to its work. It has helped it build on its existing distinct partnerships with the vibrant corporate and civil society sectors in Brazil, as well as evolve specific approaches to distinct problems.

In Argentina UNICEF has traditionally used field visits by staff as the only presence in provinces where cooperation is not just based on the signed agreement with the Government of Argentina but also signed agreements with Provincial authorities for specific interventions. UNICEF has one experience with a locally recruited consultant working in the Province of Tucumán. The consultant was recruited based on his local knowledge and access to the Provincial authorities. This resulted in faster achievement of results than in other provinces.

Peru has had specific offices in different parts of the country established because of the huge distances and difficulty of access, although this originally coincided with regions of greatest need. It has also used consultants in other parts of the country, sometimes seconded to regional government offices, for specific programming work and has generated agreements with local leaders, as in Ventanilla.

In Mexico and Nicaragua, UNICEF has provided a staff member to join a joint UN office, in San Cristobal de las Casas and Bilwi respectively. These offices were established by UNDP using Spanish MDG funds and it is not clear if the funds will continue (see annex 1 for more detail). Both these staff members are essential to the UNICEF supported work going on in the regions and highly appreciated by counterparts. In both cases the counterparts do not see them as part of a UN operation but as UNICEF. UNICEF needs to urgently review how a staff member may operate in and be based sub-nationally without a specific physical office structure.

In Mexico there is also the example of the Implementing Partner approach in Yucatán where a designated NGO, in this case IEPAAC, which is well established locally, with a reputation for integrity and independence, has served as implementing partner for Education and Child Protection programmes. UNICEF visits regularly and there is frequent telephonic and email contact. The partner has 37 staff and its own programmes as well as working as UNICEF's partner. This is not unique for UNICEF in Mexico where the Government had not allowed the UN to develop sub-offices until the establishment of San Cristobal in Chiapas. Yet, as a modality, it presents an interesting approach that other countries could assess with a view to adapt, particularly those with long established zone offices such as Brazil or Peru.

- 5) What are the criteria established for having such a sub-national presence? What should be the criteria?

There are no generally accepted criteria for establishing a sub-national presence. The notion most expressed by staff was that to open an office, another one had to close first. This issue has been addressed in the OIA preliminary summary of Observations on an Audit of the Management of Zone offices, 2011. Historically sub-national offices were set up in areas of programme priority and/or for logistics purposes (difficulty of access or time taken to get there). This evaluation also found that governments also make specific requests for sub-offices to be established (Iquitos in Peru and Bilwi in Nicaragua)

The two examples of UNICEF becoming part of a joint UN office were interesting in that this was seen by UNICEF as an opportunity for establishing a presence by putting one or two individuals into such an office. This may not be a long term solution, however, as these offices currently depend at least partially on external funding and would have to rely on a higher proportion of cost sharing among agencies and/or subsidy from the host or local government.

As reported earlier, the 2006 EAPRO report by Stephen Woodhouse identified 10 criteria for sub-national presence (pp8-9). While they are still a good basis for evolving criteria there are considerations which would modify the original points. In the following list this evaluator's comments follow the original recommended criteria which are in italics:

- a) *The state of development of a country where limited government capacity for management could be a reason to create a sub-office promoting multi-sectoral approaches.* However, this would now exclude countries such as Brazil and Mexico where we have seen a creative and successful use of sub-national programming and presence which has had and continues to have direct impact on State and/or National policy despite well developed government management capacity.

- b) *The degree of fiscal and political decentralization, with justification for a presence increasing with the degree of local autonomy exercised.* This has been used in the Americas as justification. However, although there may be a temporary need, as the innovation of the *Selo Municipal* demonstrated in Brazil, it would be impractical to generalize unless there were certain other criteria attached relating to specific priorities and time frames. This is particularly true when the decentralization is to Municipal level. Country Programme documentation needs to be very clear on anticipated results and any difference they would make to the national situation of children and women.

- c) *The degree of decentralization of civil society and other partners, such as academia, the media, faith organizations, professional associations, service clubs, private companies and NGOs.* This would be relevant in a large country or a country with regional development poles, less so with smaller countries where organizations of this kind are concentrated in the capital.

- d) *Significant internal disparities in a country.* This is a criterion often stated and at the origin of the decisions to create sub-national offices in countries which have had them for some time; Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador. Yet what happens either if the disparities are significantly reduced or if they are not reduced, and in what time-frame. Both scenarios have to be analyzed. This means undertaking a regular assessment of the need for and role of the zone office or other form of sub-national presence.
- e) *The size of a country and associated logistics issues.* This has also been a factor in decisions to establish sub-national offices in several countries, most recently Iquitos in Peru. However, the notion of the first zone office in Fortaleza in Brazil in 1989 was to “bring local issues to Brasilia in an intersectoral way and to be the voice of UNICEF in Ceará.”
- f) *The marginal costs or savings in having a sub-national presence.* This is always an issue but it becomes problematic to triangulate the costs issue with that of programmatic benefit and that of country programme priority. It is an analysis that needs to be done regularly. Each country programme management plan should include a section on the rationale for a sub-national presence with a cost-benefit analysis. For middle-income countries in particular, where UNICEF resources are scarce, such an analysis should include the expected value added of such a presence as well as the time frame for it.
- g) *Donor interest in sub-national presence.* For the last 15 years all sub-national offices have had to be financed from donor funding.
- h) *Counterpart attitudes.* This is important but there can be differences between what local and national authorities say. In Mexico, the federal government does not really want a sub-national presence but local administrations often do. Of course, it works best when all interests are aligned.
- i) *Security concerns.* This now seems to be a driver of decision making by UN and UNICEF Headquarters on establishment particularly MOSS and MORSS compliance. It remains an important consideration but may need to be modified to accommodate different levels of security for different types of presence. With this in view, UNICEF and the UN should assess whether more flexible models could be applied within the current security rules.

- j) *Other UN decentralization to take advantage for substantive and administrative cooperation.* This must remain a criterion but the examples observed in San Cristobal and Bilwi are not the best advertisement for this as explained above. This requires a different kind of dialogue to set joint programmatic criteria and time frames for joint UN sub-national programming and presence.

In addition to the above, the most important criteria would be to ensure

- i) sub-national programming is specifically highlighted in programme documentation;
- ii) any suggestion of a sub-national presence has to be re-justified where it already exists and justified for new requests, using programming priorities and clear time-lines;
- iii) there should be particular analysis of presence when it has been for over five years in areas that remain highly disadvantaged. If the presence alone has not improved the situation of children, what is the alternative solution?
- iv) there is a plan for devolving over time the responsibility for oversight of UNICEF's support to a local partner, governmental or NGO (such as IEPAAC in Yucatán) and developing the indicators to assess progress. Finally, the addition of a sub-national presence has to be an integral part of a country programme or series of programmes.

Final comments and recommendations:

All country programmes have looked at decentralized data for their countries. It is evident that sub-national programmes that have been built on a local initiative, a particular idea or opportunity, or an experience from elsewhere (an example of this would be the UPP in Rio adapted from a Colombian scheme) have thrived with UNICEF support. In some cases this was organized directly from the country office while in others it was complemented by, or originated from a Zone office or other type of sub-national presence. The issue of trust and credibility between UNICEF and its partners is of critical importance. As mentioned, this was highlighted by the Senior Brazilian official in charge of multilateral cooperation. Trust is built over time and demands a level of integrity, patience and willingness to adapt, but in a smart way that allows for the relationships to develop while being highly task oriented. In both Argentina and Peru staff mentioned relationship issues in some parts of the country. The feeling was that work is hindered and resources might be better utilized focusing in areas where there was a greater acceptance of UNICEF and its ideas. While understandable, there is also a counterargument that when one approach to influence counterparts fails, another should be tried. If the establishment of an office in one location in Southern Peru has not produced the synergy to accelerate development and improve the situation of children, it may

not just be a question of closing the office but one of finding an alternative approach to influence local leadership and practice, whether with an implementing partner, through influencing national orientation programmes or through use of the media.

It is suggested that the following four documents provide the basis for consideration when evolving the country programme recommendation and management plan:

- a) The national development strategy or equivalent which usually provides a medium to long term framework for action. This should include any budgetary information conveying how the government intends to finance its programmes.
- b) The most recent situation analysis of children and women for the country which will include disparity mapping for a range of economic and social indicators. Both Brazil and Mexico have access to well-developed mapping of this kind.
- c) The lessons learned from the previous programme cycle, either through evaluation or a rapid participatory review process. It is important that this is managed in a timely manner so that learning can be applied to the new programme cycle and proposal for changes in the management structure
- d) UNICEF's latest Medium Term Strategic Plan

The above will provide a basis to focus a country programme on activities that will accelerate improvements in the lives of children, and determine the mix of strategic results areas and office presence that will make the biggest difference.

This should be complemented by a review against the ten Woodhouse criteria (see Annex 4) modified by this evaluator's comments on pages 30-32 above as well as the following:

- i) Undertake local situation analyses for any geographical areas being considered as a focus of attention;
- ii) Prepare an analysis of the potential for building institutional capacity (e.g. through interventions at annual sub-national or national meetings of mayors, governors or other leaders);
- iii) Provide a rationale for any sub-national area where UNICEF wishes to focus and a rationale for any sub-national structure UNICEF wishes to propose;
- iv) Analyze potential implementing partners (whether government, civil society or academia) and their potential for taking on aspects of the work UNICEF is considering doing either immediately or after a period of time;
- v) If UNICEF wishes to propose a sub-national presence, present a description of type, purpose, and time frame for such presence (e.g. within four years, through a consultant seconded to the Department of Education, establish the policy and precedent for ensuring that all girls in x area are registered and attend school regularly until at least the age of 14, with options of staying through the complete secondary cycle). There could be multiple purposes for such a presence.
- vi) Prepare an analysis of advantages, disadvantages and costs of a sub-national presence compared to a protocol of regular visits from the country office. This

- should include issues of level of expertise, communication ability in the appropriate language, where and by whom decisions are ultimately taken.
- vii) Consider the use of block grants in association with capacity building (e.g. under ii) above) to stimulate the rapid transfer of programme “ownership.”

The following process chart for decision making is proposed as a checklist for a rapid evaluation of the need for a discrete sub-national presence or not and the kind of presence:

- 1) Based on the situation analysis is there a need for a geographical focus? If yes, is there a need for a sub-national presence? If yes, is it for a period of two programme cycles or more? If yes, analyze the cost and relative merit of a) a zone office and b) working with a local Implementing Partner, if such a partner is deemed to be available.
- 2) If there is no need for geographical focus, then no specific action is needed regarding a sub-national presence
- 3) If there is need for a geographic focus but no need for a sub-national presence, analyze and explain how the country office will address the need.
- 4) If there is need for a sub-national presence but for less than two programme cycles, is a staff presence needed? If yes, analyze the options of a) joining a joint UN office if one exists or is under consideration, b) outposting a staff member to a local government department or counterpart entity, c) whether a local Implementing Partner can undertake the work.
- 5) If there is no need for a staff presence, analyze the provision of specific technical assistance through a) consultants embedded with local authorities, b) outsourcing to a specialist company or consortium, c) the use of block grants to stimulate action, d) the contracting of a local Implementing Partner with regular technical assistance from experts of the UNICEF country office.
- 6) If there is no need for a geographic focus, is there still a need for a sub-national presence for logistics reasons? If yes, is there a need for a presence for a period of two programme cycles or more? If yes, follow the sequence of 1) above. If no, follow the sequence of 3) or 4) above as appropriate.

This can also be expressed as in the flow chart below

Checklist for a rapid evaluation of the need for a discrete sub-national presence or not and the kind of presence:



In addition, any zone office that currently exists and has been in place for a period of five years or more should be reassessed against the above criteria at the next opportunity (to feed into a mid-term review or country programme exercise). This analysis should also undertake a review of staff members present in a sub-national location, their level, how long they have been there and the Regional HR staff should undertake a career assessment to guide staff recruitment and rotation.

If the sub-national presence has been there for some time, what are the indicators of success or failure in attaining the objectives for the presence? The following question needs to be answered: If it has succeeded what is the reason for its continued existence? If it has failed, what is the reason for its continued existence? In either case, the rationale should be focused on the impact in relation to the objectives of the overall country programme.

Overall sub-national programmes and pilots have been a source of innovation and inspiration contributing to improvements in children's lives, greater equity in terms of access to services and the reduction of poverty. They should remain at the core of UNICEF's programme work and intention to influence the policy and practice of government at all levels. UNICEF is generally seen as a neutral, independent and authoritative entity on the national stage based on many years of visibility and has developed an enviable credibility in most countries while supporting national development. The possibility of the greater integration of implementing partners to ensure a wider range of options for sustainable actions in favour of children, presents an opportunity and challenge for UNICEF offices as they struggle with the declining real value of core resources available to them. This should not, however, deter them from exploring new ways for accelerating development and setting time-limited objectives for achieving milestones within their programmes.

Annex 1: Country Reports:

Brazil:

In **Brazil**, Fortaleza, in the State of Ceará, has one of the oldest zone offices, or sub-national offices, in the Americas region, not counting the time before the late 1980s and beyond when one country served as a hub for several countries which were then called sub-offices (as an example, Asunción and La Paz were sub-offices of Lima). From its beginnings in the late 1980s to the present day the Fortaleza office has been a cradle of innovation and a source for change in policy and practice in Brazil, firstly in Child Survival and later in other key areas of UNICEF interest, most recently in Education and Literacy, and steadily over time promoting a gender equality approach. The office was not set up with that idea. This was to “bring local issues to Brasilia in an intersectoral way and to be the voice of UNICEF in Ceará.” The role changed over time and, most recently, has been involved in building capacity at municipal level, as part of the Brazilian decentralization process under the Federative Pact of 1988.

Fortaleza staff have a strong feeling of pride about the transformational role of the office and its capacity building track record. They (it is a small office) started talking about the most recent contribution of the UNICEF office in Fortaleza: advocating for and supporting the change in approach to child illiteracy which had led to a change in public policy and was funded by using a specific portion of the State sales tax revenues. This is linked to the PAIC literacy programme which focuses on children reaching the correct literacy levels at the right age²⁸. It provides tax-based incentives to municipalities that participate, and the State government is constitutionally obliged to transfer 25 percent of the state tax levied on circulation of merchandise and services (ICMS) to the State’s municipalities. In Ceará, the transfer of ICMS taxes is strongly tied to the improvement of primary education indicators measured by literacy results of second graders and performance results of fifth graders²⁹. The daily newspaper Folha de São Paulo printed an article urging national education authorities to replicate the programme in other parts of the country. It cited data showing that acceptable reading, writing and comprehension levels of second graders had jumped from 15% in 2005 to 56% in 2010³⁰. This work on education ties in very well with The Municipal Seal of Approval, the most visible current link between UNICEF and activities in Ceará and its two neighbouring States. One interesting statistic is that the age/grade distortion in schools was reduced by over 60% in municipalities involved in the Seal programme. There are 13 MDG targets referred to under the Seal, including those for Education, although it is a challenge to convert them into specific municipal goals to be able track them. The Seal itself is a good example of the role of a sub-national office. It was started in Ceará State and has now expanded to eleven States. A closer look at the office of Fortaleza

²⁸ PAIC is the acronym for *Programa Aprender na Idade Certa*

²⁹ This is extracted from a preliminary version of a forthcoming publication by Boehle-Giuffrida, Bettina; *The Challenge of Decentralized Education Policy in Brazil, Two case studies from the Northeast*, January 2011, page 16.

³⁰ Oliveira, E. An article entitled *Programa melhora a alfabetização de alunos no Ceará* in Folha de São Paulo, 26 June 2010.

revealed that there were sufficient data available, both to set up clear targets and indicators of progress as well as to assess results. An example given by UNICEF Fortaleza staff is that over the period that there has been a UNICEF office in Fortaleza there has been reduction in average family size from >6 children per family (1989) to <3 children per family in 2009; a dramatic reduction within a single generation. Although there is no suggestion of a direct causal relationship this one statistic led to a discussion with mayors, officials and UNICEF staff about the associated evidence of what may have caused such a decline. Firstly, the dramatic change in the role and status of women, particularly in urban areas. [*Note: the definition of urban in Brazil can vary considerably and is often a local and subjective definition, and since all of the country is “municipalized” and not based on administrative units above a certain size.*] More directly related to the Seal are the indicators for the Infant Mortality Rate for the years 2004-2006 where municipalities involved in the programme had rates of reduction of mortality three times greater than other municipalities. Similarly, ante-natal care increased three times faster in the Seal municipalities in the same period and malnutrition rates for children under five years old were halved from 2004 to 2007.³¹

A factor linked to this that is considered to be of the highest importance is that **girls are staying longer in school, particularly primary school**. One statistic emerged that 60% of households in Ceará State have women providers. Anecdotally, older officials and the mayors spoke of a different response to severe drought recently. In the past this provoked widespread migration out of the State and to the large cities, particularly of men. This migration has almost disappeared. The mayors, in particular, put this down to a ‘marriage’ of investments in infrastructure and in social welfare. Nevertheless, there is still no clear explanation why, if there is less or virtually no out-migration at a time of climate stress, women are now the main providers in the majority of households.

There had been an important decentralization of systems: Health, Education and Social Welfare (*Assistência Social*). This seems to have had a major impact, particularly regarding local ownership of activities and results. This is where the role of the Municipal Seal has been important. Another example is that when staff made the assertion that there was a gender issue in schools they could show that the school dropout rate for boys was significantly higher than that of girls. That had been an early assumption as the dropout rates were similar to the Caribbean, yet it had not been borne out by the data which suggested a more general issue across different racial and social groups, possibly more related to family levels of income.

For Mayors (Interviews with both the President of the Mayors’ Association of Ceará and a multiple winner of the Municipal Seal), the Municipal Seal, now twelve years old, is an important incentive. It establishes goals for public policy for children and adolescents and acts as a guide for them and their staff. They are keen that UNICEF continues its involvement and see it as critical for both ensuring good performance and ensuring continuity (Mayors have four-year mandates with one re-election possible). They also mentioned that tasks change over time. UNICEF, Fortaleza, helped introduce birth registration and facilitated the increasing use of

³¹ The statistics in this section were provided by UNICEF Fortaleza and UNICEF Brasília.

the birth certificate. They would like Seal prizes to be awarded more frequently than once every three years; that this would allow for more frequent winners and the possibility of more successful municipalities twinning with less successful ones. They feel the association with UNICEF is fundamental. The name brings credibility; UNICEF is seen by the general public as a neutral, non-political body, and is believed. They said there was still room for improvement; there should be greater interchange between mayors; and more access to investments. In this regard they are trying to obtain IDB support to the Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES) to access credit for successful municipalities. They were impressed by UNICEF's role in successfully helping them focus on mortality reduction as well as basic literacy and education quality as well as in helping them integrate programmes. This was despite UNICEF only having a small office (8 staff in five programme areas). However, they pointed to the growing base of municipal level expertise: doctors, nutritionists, psychologists etc who could help take on new ideas and practices faster. This is where UNICEF could possibly begin to see its role as fostering and supporting municipal administrations to become more accountable for their responsibilities according to the Constitution.

For the State Education Secretary the special partnership that had evolved with UNICEF, Fortaleza helped the State pioneer the PAIC programme of support to community initiatives in the mid-2000s. This led to every Municipality becoming involved, and gained the interest of other states and the federal authorities. UNICEF's traditional methodology for promoting partnerships and involving all stakeholders proved to be its most important role in this as far as the State Education authorities were concerned. The Secretary considered UNICEF's role over the next three years to be one of providing a greater technical contribution, and working with her department on planning (UNICEF brings a "legitimacy and credibility") as they address the challenges posed by:

- 1) providing educational opportunity for the 0-5 age group....universal access for the 4 and 5 year olds; and an increased "offer" of quality interventions for the 0-3 year olds;
- 2) the issues faced by young people (14-18 year olds). Improving school and preparing for work, linking with technical education and apprenticeship. This would include creating a space for integrated learning and development for young people in school and out of school, in social projects. They are developing a programme of technological inclusion, *e-jovem*, to lead young people towards technical qualifications. The role of UNICEF would be to bring partners together to share good practice.

This has completely changed the results of education as measured by the literacy and numeracy of adolescents after 11 years of schooling. For the Secretary, a key factor was the literacy programme. The Governor made it a priority; UNICEF provided the "glue" to bring municipalities together and helped create the policy needed. All municipalities became involved and other States and the Federal authorities became interested. The Secretary saw the key component of UNICEF's prior involvement was to help to promote partnerships at State and municipal level and bring all stakeholders into the programme. Looking forward, she saw UNICEF bringing legitimacy and credibility to the next tasks of providing universal access for pre-school children of 4 and 5 years of age as well as overhauling the system of outreach to

adolescent children over the age of 14 both inside and outside the school system. To her, the role of the Fortaleza office was critical in evolving the programme and getting to the next stage of development.

The non-governmental partner, the Instituto de Promoção da Nutrição e do Desenvolvimento Humano (IPREDE) has been working in Fortaleza for 24 years. The focus was nutrition and weight gain in children, primarily through food supplements. They were supported by UNICEF for many years before they completely reoriented themselves in 2006 to become more focused on child development and the empowerment of women. They say that UNICEF's role in this transformation was paramount. The Fortaleza office linked them with other experiences in the world and helped them network appropriately across a number of themes; in addition to nutrition, and maternal and child health, they started looking, among other things, at the issue of domestic violence. To strengthen the relationship between mother and child violence they have evolved a system of the *mãe mediadora* (mother mediator). This seems to have both highlighted the issue and alleviated the problem. This has had major impact in attracting the attention of legislators in the State Assembly, has influenced State policy and is spreading.

IPREDE is moving away from its previous mode of relying exclusively on donations from local individuals and organizations, and has become 50% self-sufficient by running courses and hosting events. Next year, 2012, they will run their first course on Early Child Development. This will be for all those caring for young infants, from pediatricians to baby-sitters. They would like greater interaction with UNICEF to help them network more on this, something they are already doing with three universities in different parts of Brazil. The idea is to strengthen a national network for Early Childhood. Indeed, UNICEF has helped establish them as a Centre of Reference internationally. They now provide tele-health lectures via web-cam for other countries, including Angola and Cape Verde. In an interesting analogy they compare Angola's infant mortality to Brazil's 30 years ago.

They look to UNICEF Fortaleza to help them speed up with their aim of becoming completely self-sufficient, to link them with the private sector and to promote a better understanding of social responsibility by all sectors of society. They say this rapid evolution has also been influenced by the change in Government attitudes over the past five years from "welfarist" or charity to development and that UNICEF played a major role in making that happen.

If the Fortaleza office is small, the office in Rio de Janeiro is even smaller with two senior professionals managing the programme. It is the youngest sub-office in terms of undertaking programming work. There has, however, been a UNICEF office in Rio for many years as it was a major global centre for Greeting Cards operations for many years, including printing, and when that operation closed it became a centre for private sector fund raising. This is important as the UNICEF brand was already well established. A programme section was introduced in order to develop the Urban Platform Methodology, one of three platforms UNICEF uses in the country to geographically segment its programming work: Semi-Arid (which includes the Fortaleza office), Urban, and Amazon. The Rio zone office is also part of the Semi-Arid Platform as its remit stretches North throughout the States of Rio de Janeiro and Espírito Santo. When this

consultant visited Rio, the city was transfixed by 4 days of violence in some of the *favelas* after police units “retook” some areas from the gangs who had been controlling them. This was the UPP programme, *Unidades de Policia Pacificadora*, a programme that established a government presence and was followed by intense social programmes. In Rio de Janeiro special police units trained in protecting slum residents and reducing armed violence are regaining control of urban communities which for many years have been dominated by armed drug dealers. After arriving the police remain in the area while public policies and services in health, education, social welfare, urbanization, sport and culture are implemented in a coordinated way. This gave an opportunity to look at UNICEF networks, partnerships, adolescent involvement and monitoring. The role in urban programming started in 2006. Rio has 1,000 *favelas* spread out within and around the city of 6 million people; or 10 million in Greater Rio. UNICEF is currently working in 50 communities and sees its role principally as a convening power. It brings together different stakeholders from municipal and local authorities, community leaders, civil society, the private sector, the media and, importantly, a network of teenage health promoters and a network of youth communicators. The role of UNICEF had to be managed delicately at the start as there was much suspicion between stakeholders. It is still a sensitive role and UNICEF has quietly been spreading its participatory methodology.

The office shared the urban centre methodology at the “child friendly cities” meeting with participants from different countries. This event provided an opportunity to disseminate ideas and improve its methodology. In the end they evolved a system for certifying municipal stakeholders. This helped UNICEF evolve into being seen as a neutral convening power and, in particular, creating communication links between young people and local authorities.

It was felt that communities would be fed up with invitations to participate in meetings and empty promises, but in this case it has become very popular despite no stipends being provided. UNICEF initially expected to work with about 10 communities. In the end 95 wanted to join and this was reduced to 50 through a participatory process to cover different parts of the city. Through the urban platform mobilization it is expected to convene different social representatives: adolescents, NGOs, local officials (e.g. teachers) and community leaders. There is no longer resistance to this approach and UNICEF is established as a neutral convening power. The platform contributes to increased communications between young people and between them and the local authorities. This is currently supported by a politically aligned President, Governor and Mayor who see this work as essential to prepare for the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics.

The role of UNICEF and its positioning has had to be delicately managed as being neither pro-nor anti-police; nor pro-drug dealers. Its positioning has been pro-children. To do this it has also worked with the *Ministerio Publico* on promoting rights, especially the right to learn. UNICEF is seen as helping establish new relationships. It works in partnership with CEDAPS, a NGO which promotes community networks. They help replicate the participatory methodology and strengthen it. One important part of this is the network of teenage health promoters (*Rede de*

adolescentes promotores de saude). This works as Rio has a level of tolerance based on its street culture. So, working together is a methodology to overcome the traditional stand-off between Authorities and Civil Society. However, there are issues of corruption in grassroots organizations too.

CEDAPS has an issue of the constant violation of rights and believes that there is benefit in bringing different people together to contribute to the maturing of democracy with greater community participation. They see their role as one of ensuring sustainability of progress by building capacity and promoting participation. So far the 50 communities in Rio are part of this (and, separately, 50 more in Sao Paulo). One interesting observation is that “professionals” of all professions have no or little experience of working in the *favela* communities. This is a new learning experience for everyone. There have been other efforts to do this work but with stipends. UNICEF said that it was not sustainable that way. This has helped UNICEF establish itself as a ‘marriage broker’ between communities and authorities and has attracted the interest of mayors and federal authorities. The coalition involved includes the local public authority, civil society, communities, adolescents, media and the private sector. The partnership is goal driven with goals to be accomplished by both the community and the municipal authorities. Meetings can be tense but the feeling is that this approach has made contacts and discussions easier. Community leadership has power so it needs to be brought along by creating demand through participatory diagnostics. One innovation is the use of mapping, including Google Earth to allow communities and municipal leaders to understand issues visually.

At the time of the evaluator’s visit, the UPP approach was working in 34 communities located in 13 *favelas*. There is a clear forward vision for integrating some aspects of the work into routine services, a transition through a regular and democratic process. There are different issues at play, from rubbish collection to accessing bank credit. Here there is an issue of supply and demand that needs working out. There are residents’ associations which cannot be by-passed but are sometimes obstacles themselves. The municipality itself feels the authorities could do more; for instance, when they evict drug traffickers from an area they should not leave a vacuum; however, UNICEF could also do more especially helping solve the issue of demand for employment. Also understanding better the “accompanying of a process” role of UNICEF, where for children moving from one reality (e.g. the drug trafficking world) to another requires some time and concentration before the irrevocable opting out of the previous life can occur. This is a challenge for Brazilian public policy: how to put the ideas into practice. The self analysis by the municipal authorities is that they are good at creating policy but patchy on implementation. This was summarized as a question, “how can we create a heterogeneous approach to integrate marginal communities with the city?” They were clear that the European model of post world war II job creation and integration will not work; it was tried before. They feel the need to develop new constructs for social mobility within society and overcome the ‘war’ between adolescents and the rest of society.

One interesting discovery is that the UPP idea (physical protection followed by social action) was based on the Colombian experience with different governments. This kind of horizontal exchange is an asset for Rio's State representatives. Another example is the special health unit, UPA, which is being adopted by the Province of Buenos Aires in Argentina, and is based on the Rio model. The authorities see their role as finding the best practices and applying them. This view finds UNICEF (and UN Habitat) in the role of a bank of good practices and methodologies that can answer the How to...? questions. This fits into a new strategic plan for Rio State that will be published this year (2011) by the State Government and will be the guide for future action.

At State level, the State Council on Children and Adolescents' Rights decides on the use of private contributions. However, the private sector is demanding a greater say in how part of the taxes they provide can be targeted. The State representative considered UNICEF essential in providing experience and credibility as well as the ability to link with organizations that work with young people. It was felt that UNICEF's presence complements local institutions, is intrinsically linked to what is going on, works in an integrated way through its mandate and, therefore, helps develop, promote and support policy change and/or implementation.

As mentioned above, this programme has become a popular cause with some private companies and the latter are now demanding a greater say in how State corporate taxes are channeled. UNICEF has developed excellent partnerships with companies such as Prudential (which works with young communicators in five States but would like to see better indicators for the urban platform), and Petrobras which is also a strong partner in the semi arid north-east of the country (they link with their own social programme; they budget Reais 180m per year for this area of work, including supporting the *Selo Municipal*). Both like working with UNICEF.

UNICEF will be evaluating progress as it comes to the end of the first phase of its interventions. The indicators they have are the classic UNICEF ones that rely on school attendance data, infant mortality, teen pregnancy, the homicide rate, among others. These do not easily lend themselves to the task and UNICEF will need to construct new indicators that can test social results, perhaps "citizenship." It also needs to define values for the independence and credibility that its counterparts rate so highly. For a new phase UNICEF may want to establish clearer goals and objectives based on the experience of the last five years.

In looking forward there is an extraordinary focus of the authorities in order to make Rio work. The annual events from now through 2016 include the following major international ones: 2012, Rio + 20 (Environment); 2013, Papal visit (possibly his last international trip); 2014, World Cup; 2015, 450th anniversary of Rio; 2016, Olympics. This presents an extraordinary opportunity for UNICEF to provide transformational support and crack some of these problems. This is clearly a major reason why the authorities want to transform the city, anticipating the millions of visitors who will be attending the various events. The plan the State authorities are publishing is one they have developed as a 20 year plan, 2008-2027 which is the blueprint for the development of Rio. They see UNICEF and UN Habitat as the two UN organizations, possibly with PAHO too, that can help them network, find the appropriate technical or professional

solutions and accelerate progress. The current political alignment between the Federal, State and Municipal governments certainly seems to make accelerated action feasible. The major funding is with the three levels of government. UNICEF should invest in finding the best practitioners to make change happen. It needs to help set the right objectives, influence results and outcomes starting with mapping and diagnosing, then convene and build capacity to implement and monitor.

There is no doubt that the authorities expect UNICEF to stay on in Rio for a while.

The Federal Government, in the person of the Federal Director of Multilateral Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, considers UNICEF to be the closest to what Brazil wants from an international presence in the country: a “supplier” of technical assistance and tester of new ideas, a catalyser and mobilizer but NOT an administrator of resources for the country. He saw UNICEF continuing to play a critical role and wished other partners would work in a similar way. The neutral presence was an important factor and was happy UNICEF, through its sub-offices, was accompanying the decentralization process and the shift to municipality financial and implementation control. UNICEF’s role, as he saw it, was partly to help mayors understand issues of social cohesion and sustainability and partly to reinforce decentralized institutions as well as to introduce new ideas and practices. This made the quality of investment and its management important and he felt UNICEF remains a critical partner for Brazil to stay on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in less privileged parts of the country. He was very happy with the conclusion of UNICEF’s mid-term review (*um equilibrio de trabalho*). He felt the new country programme had clear objectives related to the Government’s own investments. He saw UNICEF as the day-to-day assurer of policies e.g. accelerating education for the poorest from now until 2016. He felt the sub-offices play an excellent role. UNICEF is the example other agencies should follow. For the others the cost of sub-offices became a problem so that it became the administration of dollars rather than programmes. He felt other agencies were suffering an identity crisis. Partnership with the private sector could be enhanced by involving his department in terms of any public policies that emerged. The work with civil society was exemplary. However, all have to work within the programme framework and show how they contribute to programme goals.

In Brazil UNICEF has certainly been both efficient and relevant in its use of zone offices. A small number of staff in each zone office performs a large volume of quality work; the interplay between country office and zone office is constant and is an essential part of the success. Zone offices are not left to their own devices but their work is part of a thought-through country plan. Counterparts are highly appreciative and the results show that many ideas that started and were incubated at State or sub-State level in one part of the country become national policy or practice. This is an ongoing process and needs to be framed within clearer objectives and time lines for each office as well as being merged into the schedule for the whole country programme.

Only a small part of the different statements by the various counterparts above is covered in any of the country office documentation and the statistics are lost in the national averages so that it is difficult comparing progress in areas with a UNICEF presence with areas without such a presence. Yet, the very clear historical and current role of the Fortaleza office emerges immediately. It is seen as a major catalyst for change and, for counterparts, desirable for moving forward. The country office has often used Ceará state and the sub-national office in Fortaleza as a beacon for innovation; often taken up by the country office as a whole or by other states and federal government. This means that the notion of an “exit strategy” has no meaning when, as in this case, the presence has become an independent, organic yet integral part of governance for innovating solutions and building capacity. Is it bad or wrong for this to happen? This consultant believes that the continuing innovation over two decades by a small group of individuals in the Fortaleza office (they do rotate both in and out of UNICEF and to other offices in the country). Currently all are well qualified national staff, supported by a country office open to new ideas and experimentation and in a context which makes replicability and scale up possible. It is a smart way to influence policy making and change and supporting progressive individuals at different parts of the governance system; Municipal, State and Federal. The question to ask is “what are you expecting to achieve and in what time frame?”

The new anticipated levels of collaboration laid out by counterparts in the interviews relayed above need to be quantified, assessed and integrated into the country office planning process. To do this and create SMART objectives 2009 figures can be used as a baseline for 2015 measurement. Activities can be integrated to accelerate progress, for instance by twinning municipalities to bring all up to the level of the best. For data collection, quickly adapt the use of cell phones for two way information flows. For reporting, adapt the use of boxes, figures and tables to highlight sub-national progress and its influence nationally.

When discussing this in the Brasilia country office some interesting issues emerged from the discussions with the Representative, the country management team, the Monitoring and Evaluation officer and the “platform” focal points (the country programme is divided into three geographic platforms: urban, semi-arid and Amazon). The Representative laid out some of the underlying issues. What is UNICEF’s efficiency? What is the convening power of UNICEF? What is its “behind the scenes work” that strengthens everything? She then shared examples. The *Selo Municipal* work on data systems had improved government’s own recording and reporting. She saw UNICEF’s catalytic role as, for instance, sharing good practice. There are now over 1,000 “*articuladores*” working at municipal level, selected by mayors, working voluntarily but adhering to a code of conduct. Data is looked at according to different parameters: wealth, racial/ethnic, geographic/sub-national, age etc. She sees the role of UNICEF to deconstruct averages and moving to absolute numbers.

As an example: comparing 2005 and 2009, deaths of children <1 year old declined from 80 thousand to 56 thousand; children with positive HIV declined from 816 to 312; numbers of children out of school dropped from 800 thousand (of whom 550 thousand were Afro-

Brazilians) to 570 thousand.³² This was helpful and the areas with the greatest problems could be identified. However there were still issues relating to registration and to child labour. The massive investments in Education are seen to have been beneficial, from *bolsa familia* to making education free for all 4-17 year olds. It is clear that UNICEF contributed to these; the former through targeted investments at sub-national level that became first State level policy then national policy.

The platform focal points in the country office do not duplicate the work of the zone offices. They maintain the plans, represent the office in meetings and supervise the various agreements as well as track the use of resources. They found, for instance, that the Amazon model was too expensive and not replicable. They needed to restart it. In doing so they focused on the “how?” As an example, there were over 1,000 schools which provided bilingual education. However the results showed only slow improvement. This required a fresh analysis. It is refreshing to see that the Brazil office continually examines its assumptions. For example when the evidence showed that 40% of adolescents living in poverty also have the least education for their age cohort it raised the question of where most poor people live. This was important as one issue the Country Programme documentation did highlight very clearly was the need to become a much more serious partner in urban areas. The Urban Platform is the result of this.

Summary: UNICEF in Brazil has been both effective and relevant in its use of sub-national offices to the point that the methodology used is efficient in that a small number of staff in the different zone offices perform an enormous amount of work. Counterparts are highly appreciative and results show that many ideas originally from or supported by UNICEF in one part of the country become national policy. This is an ongoing process and one that is admired and seen as a model. However, what I have described above both for the past and for the future does not necessarily get systematically reported. The experiences would provide a good learning for other UNICEF offices. Also the staffing pattern does not really take into account the reporting function. This speaks to the efficiency question. Few staff, very well qualified, undertake an enormous amount of high quality and effective work but are insufficient to properly develop the parameters for accurate presentation and reporting. Both in the semi-arid platform and the newer urban one, results are already apparent and the need to continue is clear as it influences not just how Brazil manages its own social issues but, increasingly, how it will develop partnerships internationally. The methodologies the office uses to test ideas and help influence policies deserves to be known more widely. By the same token the office needs to consider how to transform long established zone offices and when to devolve responsibilities to partners and to develop the indicators for success to be able to pro-actively drive this process.

³² These figures were provided by the UNICEF Representative and were more recent than those in the UNICEF Brazil Annual Report for 2009 which showed 650 thousand children not attending school and that the chances of Afro-descendent children being out of school were almost double those of white children (page 3)

Argentina:

The initial review of documentation available in the regional office and New York showed that there was a good general assessment of the situation of children with some quantification. In the current CP, results are specified by Provinces with a focus on 10 out of a total 24 with the lowest social indicators.

The consultant visited Buenos Aires and met staff. To the fore in the discussions that day was the issue of premature births and neo-natal deaths linked to malnutrition which were the subject of the coordination meeting. The question raised was how to get this issue taken seriously as part of national social policy. Over 90% of the population live in urban areas (defined as >5,000 people). However rural populations (8%) were difficult to cover by surveys.

The representative and programme specialists felt that national strategies had to be complemented with specific cooperation with sectorial provincial ministries. New agreements with Governors are in place for this purpose. Joint visits by specialists to the northern provinces have been supportive of this strategy. In addressing the issue of equity the office has looked particularly at indigenous children, migrant children and very poor adolescents. This has pointed the office towards the far north where the most significant disparities appear.

Argentina does not have a sub-office although they have an experience of having a consultant who had previously worked for an NGO based in Tucuman province. This is considered to have been successful. The question being raised was whether UNICEF should open an office in the North of the country to cover the three provinces with the greatest disparities, as highlighted in reports. Decentralization is a political reality and there are over 2,000 municipalities. The country office wishes to focus on the approximately 100 municipalities where the most disadvantaged children live. This includes those in the ten northern provinces of the country.

There were several pros and cons considered. A sub-office would be practical, would cut costs of travel and would lead to better integration locally. However, a lot of the expertise and the UNICEF comprehensive political and strategic view would still be based in the capital, so that any person based in the north would mostly support local articulation and others would need to travel anyway. In favour was the sheer practicality of reducing travel costs and promoting better local integration. The Tucuman experience showed how an individual who was highly respected locally could have easy access and considerable success in moving the social agenda forward. One of the key benefits was that the person would be considered local and not an outsider. The counterargument was that most of the specific expertise and the strategic overview would still be based in the capital. This meant that the person based in the north would be responsible for establishing the local links and networking while the basic programming work would still require travel from the capital. As mentioned above, the day that this consultant visited was also a day that the coordination meeting focused on the issue of premature births and neonatal deaths. The statistics are certainly grave in Argentina with over 50% of infant mortality occurring in the first month of life with the highest rates specifically in the northern provinces. However, half of these cases are characterized as being caused by

prenatal conditions. This would require a level of specialization that would probably be best available in the capital, underscoring the counterargument above. It was also mentioned that Tucuman is a relatively more “accommodating” province to work in than some of the others.

Yet the overriding feeling, both in the meeting and in discussing with individual staff, was that the current way of doing business was not conducive to effective implementation. This is generally based on a model where the country office signs an agreement with each province for a particular action or study. There was a concern that the current model does not build capacity and it was clear that, generally, the provincial governors do not like working with civil society or non-government organizations.

Even though Argentina has, according to several people met, amongst the best possible social policies, implementation is very different in the different provinces which jealously guard their autonomy. Indeed, the 2010 Human Development Report of UNDP shows that Argentina is the fourth most unequal country in the world. The Resident Coordinator had tried to open a UN office in Tucuman but failed due to specific provisions in its basic agreement with the government. He is still in favour of a joint UN programmatic presence in the North covering two or three provinces. However, he went on to say that the province of Buenos Aires was producing 45% of GDP but was home to 60% of the population and that there were major urban problems. Although the formal definition of urban in Argentina is a settlement with more than 5,000 inhabitants the Resident Coordinator was talking of large conurbations, such as in La Plata. He mentioned that he has been attempting to engage the provincial authorities in dialogue but not very successfully so far.

Direct work with municipalities in the decentralizing system would be difficult. The challenge remains of finding an effective way of engaging with the 100 priority municipalities where the most disadvantaged children live. The country office works with different networks to increase the number and scope of municipalities involved in activities. These include the Network of Healthy Municipalities, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Cabinet Office and the think-tank CIPPEC, the Public Policy Centre for Growth and Equity, amongst others.

This led to another discussion on equity. Where should the focus of interventions be? For UNICEF it would be worth disaggregating the data by numbers of children rather than by rates alone. This would help determine where the greatest numbers of disadvantaged children reside. Indeed, the focus of reporting has highlighted the problems of indigenous children and migrant children (particularly from Bolivia and Paraguay). These also make up many of the children living in the *villas* of Buenos Aires province. The Resident Coordinator felt that the one most critical issue in the *villas* was the issue of land ownership. If that could be resolved, there could be a dramatic change.

The debate in the country office continues. The case for opening an office in the North is based on the disparities highlighted in national data. However, when one looks at the numbers and if the idea is to have an accelerated reduction of gaps there may be other alternatives to consider. Focusing on Buenos Aires province is one. It does not mean abandoning work in the

north but it may change the focus. If there is a migratory flow out of the north to Buenos Aires it may be helpful for the UN as a whole to look at how to stem the outmigration, with improved educational and employment opportunities. The Resident Coordinator was most concerned by the impact of social disparities on adolescents and young people as they searched for ways to earn money. In that case the model of an office located in the north would need to be based on ease of communications between the provinces to be covered. The three priority provinces mentioned by UNICEF are not contiguous and would also present logistical difficulties for a person based in any one town.

The issue of neonatal deaths presents a different opportunity that may be further explored. If the creation of national policy is not sufficient to influence provincial and municipal implementation then a dual accompanying approach may be worth considering. UNICEF is particularly good at communications and fund raising in Argentina. There was a concern that some important data or policies may not be reported. Thus raising media and individual interest in addressing the problem would be one component; the other would be focusing on the national professional bodies that will influence the curriculum, training and practice of doctors, specialists and nurses. UNICEF has worked and continues to work with the professional associations in Education and Health in particular. This may provide part of the solution. Another may be to find the link to engage the neonatology specialists from IPREDE in Fortaleza to partner with the appropriate Argentinean institution or association.

Summary: sub-national work was needed due to the decentralization that had occurred, the autonomy of provinces and the clear disparities in social indicators. There was also an internal feeling that the current way of doing business was not conducive to effective implementation and new paths had to continue to be explored in order to identify opportunities and capacity to increase the impact at sub-national level in terms of knowledge management. In Argentina this may best be solved by the UN agencies looking more closely at the issue of internal migration and working both with the originating and destination provinces to create the right environment for children and young people. In addition UNICEF will continue to develop data and analysis in the situation of children and on public policies, sub-national capacity and responses as well as developing strategies on key child rights issues at sub-national level.

Peru:

Unfortunately both the evaluator and the country office had limited time available. However, there were opportunities to discuss with the Representative and with staff associated with work in the Ventanilla area of Lima. A number of issues emerged. The first being that there is a mix of reasons driving the creation of zone offices and the variety of UNICEF presence at sub-national level in Peru. It is partly related to an assessment of need and vulnerability and partly logistics; the sheer distance and the time it takes to get to parts of the country. The focus is still largely on Andean and Amazon populations. This is where the greatest disparities appear.

UNICEF worked with the indigenous Amazon populations in the northern part of the Amazonas Region (One of twenty-five regions in Peru). This was in the Rio Santiago bi-national project run jointly with UNICEF Ecuador from 1998 to 2009. UNICEF also worked with indigenous Andean communities in the south of the country from 1990 to 2007. This was through the five country PROANDES programme.

A question needs to be raised regarding the impact of the interventions over time or whether the types of intervention need to be changed. UNICEF presence at the sub-national level has had mixed results. The *Buen Inicio* child development programme is a positive example. It started in 1998/9 in five departments (as they were then called): Cusco, Apurimac, Cajamarca, Loreto and Ayacucho. This subsequently led to the design and establishment of a national strategy, *CRECER*, to reduce chronic malnutrition. The model is now being adopted by the governments of both Guatemala and Honduras. According to UNICEF Peru, *CRECER* is credited with the reduction of chronic malnutrition from 30 per cent in 2007 to 17 per cent in 2010. The National *Wawa Wasí* Programme of the Ministry of Women and Social Development is also based on the sub-national experience from interventions in Puno that UNICEF supported. This programme provides for Early Childhood stimulation, education and nutrition support and currently over 50 thousand children under three years old are enrolled.

The UNICEF office also points to the establishment of *Mama Wasis*, or maternal waiting houses, as helping reduce maternal mortality in hard to reach areas. This was also originally begun as part of the PROANDES programme. In addition, UNICEF's experience in intercultural, bilingual education (IBE) within the PROANDES and PROAMAZON programmes became the basis for both national and regional IBE programmes.

The decentralization process began in 2002, and due to the pace of the decentralization of authority to municipalities, the Government asked UNICEF for greater intervention in the Amazon and UNICEF has out posted consultants for four Amazon basin regions: Ucayali, Amazonas, Madre de Dios and Loreto. There is no clear time frame for their presence and the evaluator is unaware of the specific objectives of the presence of the consultants and results to be achieved.

In the Andean regions UNICEF has three zonal offices, in Cusco, Ayacucho and Abancay since 2006. These are headed by UN volunteers. Quechua speakers make up 13 per cent of the population and Aymara speakers under 2 per cent. The UNICEF Representative expressed a concern that even with such a presence UNICEF was not physically present in the poorest region, Huancavelica, which is home to 4.8 per cent of Peru's entire population.

UNICEF was also using consultants for Ventanilla in Greater Lima and for Ica during the Emergency. Peru has a population 70 per cent urban and the capital, Lima, is home to 35 per cent (8.3 million inhabitants). In Peru generally the *CRECER* Nutrition Programme, centrally driven, seems to have been successful in substantially reducing malnutrition. In Ventanilla, UNICEF is working with other partners and the local authorities on an integrated programme which is now expressed as part of a 10 year development plan developed by the municipality

and which goes through until 2021. Over 70 per cent of the nearly 300,000 people who reside in the area are considered to be marginal to the mainstream economy. There seems to be good cooperation with the local authorities to establish appropriate policies and practices. However, although there are good examples of sub-national programmes being adopted and adapted nationally it remains unclear to what extent the specific work of the UNICEF zone offices or consultants or UNVs, where it has established another type of presence, has any impact beyond the immediate area or region of work.

The Representative is keen to align any presence at sub-national level with the need to achieve maximum impact.

Summary: the Representative still has an opportunity to re-evaluate the role and function of the different types of UNICEF presence around the country and determine the best use of resources to accelerate action and attain maximum impact.

Mexico:

The country office has been using a system of *socios ejecutores*, or implementing partners, in different provinces although it has one out posted staff member. The role of implementing partners was highlighted in a 2010 evaluation of the programme “*Todos los Niños en la Escuela*” which had started in 2003. Although Mexican States do have autonomy within the federal system, the relationship of the Capital with the States was described by one staff member as being a centralized federation alternately letting go of some powers and pulling them back in. Yet it is clear there is a need to work at both the Federal and the State level to effect change. However, although UNICEF Mexico does not have the resources and capacity to work effectively in all States it has focused on the seven it considers critical to do so, given the size and complexity of the country and the disparities within it. The evaluator visited two: Yucatán and Chiapas, the former with an implementing partner and the latter with a liaison staff member in the State. In Yucatán the implementing partner is the organization “*Investigación y Educación Popular Autogestiva A.C.*” or IEPAAC, which is well established and has been working for over 20 years primarily with Mayan communities in Yucatán and Quintana Roo States developing appropriate education models and capacity. It has a good track record of advocating for and influencing policy change in the two States. This is the primary reason UNICEF selected IEPAAC as its implementing partner in Yucatán. The founder, Guillermo Alonso, used to work as a consultant for UNICEF in Mexico City in the late 1980s. His focus then was Street Children. In discussion he felt that this familiarity can help explain how the partnership developed so productively. However, the UNICEF country office states that the transition from project based interventions to a more analytical approach to advocacy and influencing policy remains a challenge in Mexico. In this regard UNICEF Mexico considers IEPAAC to have transitioned and to be currently performing very well. It has been able to evolve by strengthening its internal expertise and capacity to, for example, undertake the first Situation Analysis of the State.

Certainly, in meeting counterparts at the State Supreme Court and at CONAFE (the State branch of the National Council for Educational Development), they were very aware that IEPAAC represented UNICEF in following through with them but they also clearly distinguished the two organizations. The work with judges and magistrates was particularly innovative in finding the methodology to transfer capacity to law officials and law students in the State. However, what also emerged is how UNICEF's work and IEPAAC's own activities do often coincide on issues of children's rights. IEPAAC tries, among other actions, to improve the specific education systems available for the Mayan populations. There is widespread migration of Mayan teenagers both within Mexico (to Mérida and the Caribbean coast) as well as to Mexico City and the USA, particularly to San Francisco and Portland. The arrangement with this group has permitted UNICEF to delve much deeper into causes of problems and potentially find indigenous solutions. IEPAAC is highly respected by the local authorities, other civil society organizations as well as Mayan communities; it has easy access to leadership and is clear when it represents UNICEF and when it is acting under its own aegis. They would like UNICEF to continue this kind of cooperation. Indeed, UNICEF brought the idea of specializing in Juvenile Justice to the State. IEPAAC is now expanding to some other States and also working with other organizations. One example is its work in four States on disaster preparedness and risk reduction which started after the hurricane of 2002. This work is supported by OCHA, UNDP and UNICEF. This modality certainly provides an efficient way for UNICEF to work in some States with the local partner providing a better, faster and more productive access than if it was doing this alone. The UNICEF country office does visit and follow up on a regular basis but the amount of autonomy of action was impressive, and, importantly, apparently not abused.

Chiapas was a very different experience without an implementing partner now; the results were not acceptable to UNICEF and the decision was made to have a direct presence in the State. UNICEF has, therefore, out posted a staff member to a UN office that had been set up in 2008 by UNDP using MDG funds from the Spanish Government that were provided to support the joint UN programme *Ventana de Paz* in five municipalities. This is the principal reason the office is located in San Cristobal de las Casas and not in the State Capital of Tuxtla Gutiérrez (TG). It means that for the frequent interactions with counterparts in the capital the staff member needs to commute a minimum of 45 minutes each way and often longer if the traffic is heavy³³. UNDP is working on a number of projects, the largest of which is a water and sanitation project covering 3 States with 8 agencies participating. Yet with the project budgeting just \$6 million over three years it seems to be a complicated arrangement. UNDP has wanted to decentralize and open sub-offices for many years. The idea was to start in Yucatán but Chiapas moved forward faster, basically because of the interest of the Governor, Juan Sabines. This gives some political exposure but the office and its activities rely primarily on external funds; which means UNDP's objective appears to be to get the State to finance the projects through it. It was clear from the discussions in the joint office that the projects are mainly 'supply' rather than 'demand' driven. UNDP has only recently started working on MDG tracking in this office and will try to set up a benchmark for each municipality. This is a

³³ The evaluator has learnt from UNICEF, Mexico that a second UNICEF staff member has been posted to the joint office which allows for a better distribution of tasks.

challenge with just one year of the current funding to run. No indicators of progress have been developed and the office was working on a partial report entitled Migration, Internal Displacement and Maternal Mortality. For UNDP its presence in the State was positive in terms of establishing close links with counterparts and increasingly getting other UN agencies to take part. The UNICEF staff member also felt that physical proximity to where the work was needed is very important.

In TG the relationship with counterparts was exemplary; with the Education Secretariat, DIF (the National Agency for Family Development) and with the Civil Registry. There was much appreciation for the work of the staff member as well as for the work of the visiting staff from the country office. Indeed, the ease and familiarity of the interactions may explain how the three entities managed to work together to develop the extraordinary database for managing school attendance and performance that they have developed as mentioned earlier. The counterparts were certainly deeply appreciative of UNICEF's role and had begun to use the tools they had developed for qualitative as well as quantitative objectives, as in understanding why a child is not registered for school or has dropped out. The President of the State DIF is the first lady, the Governor's wife. She has taken a deep interest in children throughout her husband's administration, and previous to that when he was Mayor of Tuxtla. Indeed, the State Constitution has specifically adopted the Rights of the Child. A change in Administration is due in 2012 at the end of the current six-year term. A challenge for UNICEF will be to ensure continuity with the new Administration. This needs to be thought through now so that work with all candidates for Governor can begin as soon as they announce their interest in running.

Summary: Both modalities for working at sub-national level function in that the quality of work of both the implementing partner in Yucatán and the staff member in Chiapas is outstanding. The Yucatán model offers a way of developing sustainable processes quite quickly. The Chiapas model, for now, is dependent on the staff member being located in a MOSS compliant office, in this case run by UNDP. Yet there is no certainty of continuity beyond the initial three year funding cycle of the office. Both experiences have achieved remarkable results in terms of State level policy changes. Whether these can be turned into national models needs to be explored further by the country office

Nicaragua:

The country has also undergone a decentralization of administrative decision making and budgets, broken down into three levels: regional, municipal and territorial or community; which refers to traditional lands held by indigenous groups. Resource transfer is just to the first two. UNICEF is supporting 15 out of the 153 municipalities. UNDP opened two offices in the Caribbean coast regions, in Bilwi and Bluefields, following Hurricane Felix in 2007, which hit hardest around Bilwi and further north to the Honduran border. This is a region, however, with a history of opposition and the Government was keen to align the region with the rest of the country. UNICEF has now assigned a peripatetic staff member to the Bilwi UN office to spend two weeks per month in the Northern Autonomous Region (RAAN), one week in the Southern

Autonomous Region (RAAS), and one week in the country office in Managua. Eight of the 15 municipalities UNICEF works with are in the two autonomous regions of the Caribbean, although in the northern region there is more work with traditional territories while the southern region has already developed faster in terms of structures and infrastructure. UNICEF provides support for the other seven municipalities from its office in Managua. To put this in a different perspective, 40% of UNICEF's resources are dedicated to the two Caribbean regions which account for 10% of the country's population. The Flash Appeal for resources and the influx of Aid after the hurricane provided the basis for evolving these sub-offices, followed by the use of the Spanish MDG funds, which is the current source of financing for the UN offices in the two autonomous regions.

The Director General of the Caribbean Coast Development Council, based in Managua, was not supportive of the UNDP approach of flooding the place with consultants and volunteers (UNVs) or with the UNHCR approach, neither of which builds either individual or institutional capacity. He also felt those approaches lead to the bad mentality of "*quien le paga, manda*" perhaps best translated as "he who pays the piper, calls the tune." It takes too long to plan and he felt there should be faster implementation. UNICEF provided the better approach. He pointed to water as an excellent example of how UNICEF helped transform the situation since the hurricane by working with communities. He felt water should be the lead intervention. He maintained that it was a waste of money to do things for the people. They had to be done with the people. He did feel there was a clash between indigenous peoples' rights and economic reality and development. He gave the building of roads through the self governed territories as an example of infrastructure that the local authorities did not have the resources or the capacity to maintain. He said that the government was not against the UN offices in the autonomous regions but the presence has to be consistent with the need to build local capacity.

In Bilwi, the President of the Regional Council was also in favour of the UN presence as it reinforces the role of the autonomous regions. He felt the office did not present new key result areas but provided smarter system strengthening options. He was particularly pleased at the appointment of UNICEF's new staff member there, even if he was only to spend 50% of his time in Bilwi. The new staff member is a known person, has easy access at all levels and is well respected. This will be important as even though staff from Managua do visit regularly they have no direct contact with political leadership in the municipalities. In the office there did not seem to be much practical joint work. We were later informed by the UN Resident Coordinator that 5 of the 6 joint UNDP/UNICEF programmes are not yet "coherent" with each other. One complaint of the regional government (GRAAN) was that although the UN had opened an office, the government was slow at decentralizing services and that this had only advanced in the Health sector. The GRAAN is entirely dependent on the central budget, though, and has no authority to raise revenue. The coordinator of the GRAAN is from a different political grouping than the President of the Regional Council. This has led to considerable squabbling. One common concern, though, is that donors who had been present for many years were starting to leave. They cited Denmark, the Netherlands and others. The coordinator of the GRAAN also criticized the use of the MDG funds by the UN. Her comment was that there are too many

“comisiones coordinadoras” or coordinating bodies for HIV, Water, Education, Protection and Health, taking too long to plan and absorbing resources.

The GRAAN is keen for UNICEF to be part of the UN office. However, the ‘joint programme’ now in its third year is only beginning to develop a monitoring plan. In practice UNICEF seems just to be paying rent, although staff is very active. One curious aspect of GRAAN is that there seems to be an implicit opposition to working with NGOs, whether national or international. This may need further investigation by UNICEF.

The Resident Coordinator sees it as his mission to move the UN in Nicaragua towards a single entity and a single programme based on UNDAF. His vision does not match the reality in Bilwi.

Summary: The least sustainable sub-office structure seems to be when it is linked to a UN office, even if it is practical in that it provides a security umbrella for staff and a common base of operations. This will need to be discussed with UNDP as there is an opportunity that has been missed or not appropriately used. It may be too late to rectify this if the funding dries up in 2012. For all structures, the most functional programme modality is when there is close interaction between the UNICEF country office and the sub-national structure, and when there is good acceptance from counterparts.

Annex 2: Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference Evaluation of UNICEF Programming at Sub-National Level

The UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (TACRO) is conducting an evaluation of UNICEF programming at sub-national level.

Background

For many years, UNICEF has made progress to achieve results for children and women in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Programming modalities and focus have changed gradually, moving away from mostly service delivery at the local level towards programmes aiming at influencing social policies at all levels of government, particularly at the national level, always based on evidence from the field level. Such evidence is often derived from ongoing engagement with local development partners. Also, evidence is obtained from UNICEF supported actions at the local level. With the gradual shift toward more 'upstream' programmes, it is important to identify the most appropriate mix of 'upstream' and 'downstream' work. A variety of approaches is currently applied across the country programmes in the LAC-region, without a clear indication whether these mixes continue to be the most appropriate for achieving significant results for children and women.

Moreover, country offices in the region have various modalities for managing sub-national work. In many countries, a considerable amount of 'downstream' work is managed from the country office based in the national capital while in several occasions sub-national structures are in place to manage the sub-national work. Such structures could be in the shape of a sub-office, a zone-office or an outpost. There are, however, no clear universal criteria for establishing such sub-national structures. Other countries manage 'upstream' and local level work without any sub-national structure, with sometimes special arrangements made with consultants or counterparts at the sub-national level.

Objective and targets of the evaluation

Taking into consideration the agreed core strategic roles for UNICEF in middle-income countries (attached) and the regional priority "of tackling disparities and reaching the children that are excluded from the fulfillment of their rights", the evaluation will be instrumental in informing UNICEF on its effectiveness and relevance of its programming at the sub-national level, the efficiency of the programming modalities and operational structure (with sub-offices, zone offices, outposts or managed from the country office in the capital city and other arrangements). It will also provide recommendations for criteria for having sub-offices, zone-offices or outposts or managing the programme from the country office or other modalities.

The primary set of objectives is to:

- a) Evaluate the effectiveness and relevance of UNICEF programming at sub-national level;
- b) Examine the efficiency of programming modalities;
- c) Recommend criteria for different modalities and structures for sub-national work.

As part of the evaluation, the following questions will need to be answered:

General questions

- Are the UNICEF programmes with sub-national focus achieving results for children and women, within the content of the defined country programmes and addressing the UNICEF role in middle income countries (see attached discussion paper)?
- How UNICEF is approaching local stake-holders?
- What are the different programme modalities for achieving results for children and women at the sub-national level in Latin America and the Caribbean? What type of presence works in what context?
- What are the different types of sub-national presence that UNICEF has in place, and for what purpose?
- What are the criteria established for having such sub-national presence? What should be the criteria for sub-national presence?

Specific questions for UNICEF country offices with sub-offices, zone offices or outposts:

- What do government (national and sub-national representatives/counterparts) and other key partners think about UNICEF sub-national presence, comparative advantage and complementarities?
- What management structures are/could be used to fulfill the same functions presently performed by UNICEF sub-offices, including use of partnerships?

Specific question for UNICEF country offices with sub-national programming without sub-offices, zone offices or outposts:

- What do key partners at national and sub-national level think about UNICEF ability to achieve results for children by using a mix of upstream policy work with downstream interventions? What are the key benefits and the key disadvantages of managing the sub-national work from the capital city? What are the risks and advantages for such type of modality and how well reflected is UNICEFs agenda in sub-national policies?

Specific activities to be completed to achieve the objectives:

- There will be three phases to the evaluation: a desk review, a series of field visits and interviews, and the preparation and presentation of the final report

Phase 1: the desk review will be based on available documentation. The call for proposals specifies a review of the history, rationale and criteria for establishing sub-national structures. There is to be a comparison with criteria in other regions. Part of this will entail telephone interviews with UNICEF retirees with historical experience in TACRO from the 1960s onwards.

This will be complemented by a review of effectiveness as described in donor reports, evaluations and assessments, annual reports and mid-term reviews etc. In addition there will be an examination of decentralization processes and capacity building. For this, a review of published Government documentation as well as the decentralization work of other agencies will be explored (UNDP, WB, IDB etc.). One other element for reviewing the structures and staffing will be the Country Programme Management Plans (CPMP).

An initial report will be prepared describing the above in the seven countries specified and finalizing the countries among these that would be part of the in-depth interviews and field visits (3 or 4).

Phase 2: Starting before Phase 1 has been completed; the first set of interviews will be undertaken in conjunction with the TACRO Regional Management Team (RMT) meeting in early October 2010. This will include the Regional Director, Deputy Regional Director, Regional Planning and Monitoring and Evaluation Officers, other key advisers as well as some of the Representatives of the seven countries from the original list provided by TACRO. This will be followed by preparations for the first of two field visits to take place between 18th and 27th November, 2010. This will cover Brazil and Argentina. The visit to Brazil would include visits to two sub-offices (Fortaleza and Sao Paolo, subject to the agreement of the Representative), and take about 5 working days. The visit to Argentina would be to Buenos Aires and last two working days. The second set of visits to Nicaragua and one other country would take place between 19th and 28th January 2011 and would include a second visit to TACRO to report on progress. The in-depth interviews would be conducted both with Government and civil society representatives as well as with UNICEF and other agencies' staff members.

For the above a schedule of questions will be developed in conjunction with TACRO to ensure a consistency of enquiry.

A second report will be prepared describing the process so far and any immediate outcomes from the field visits and interviews.

Phase 3: This is the phase of analysis, conclusions and recommendations. This will look at each country individually as well as make comparisons, where possible, across countries. It will see what precisely can be determined as the outcome of the particular form of sub-national programming and the modality being used. Can it be undertaken differently for the same or greater effect? Or is it operating optimally? What are the advantages and disadvantages of a sub-national presence and structure? What is the prognosis for sustainable action if UNICEF were to a) stay or enhance its presence, or leave or change its modality? Review the efficiency (in terms of cost and benefit) for different modalities of sub-national operation? Above all, list out examples of national or international policies that have emerged out of sub-national programmes.

REPORTING

As stated above, an initial report will be prepared at the end of phase 1 based on the desk review. A second descriptive report will be provided at the end of phase 2 and a final draft analytical report will be submitted at the end of phase 3 for review with TACRO and subsequent finalization. A presentation will then be prepared for presenting to the following RMT for discussion and regional decision-making. Moreover, as a start to the evaluation, a full evaluation plan, including time schedule for field visits, will be presented.

TIME FRAME

The time frame is as follows:

- 4th October: signature of contract and start of consultancy;
- 31st October: completion of phase 1 and presentation of initial report;
- 18th-27th November: visits to Brazil and Argentina;
- 15th December: presentation of phase 2 mid-point report;
- 19th-28th January: visits to Nicaragua and one other country as well as TACRO;
- 11th February: presentation of phase 2 final report;
- End February: presentation of interim results to RMT;
- 4th April: formal end of contract and presentation of final phase 3 report.

This timeline has adjusted due to a delay in finalizing arrangements at the start of the period. However, the consultant will make an effort to present the various deliverables earlier than stipulated above.

Annex 3: Itinerary and People interviewed

Visit to The Americas and Caribbean Regional Office (TACRO), Panama, 2-4 October, 2010

- 1) Introductory meeting with Bastiaan van t'Hoff, Regional Chief of Monitoring and Evaluation
- 2) Orientation meeting with Bernt Aasen, Regional Director; Debora Comini, Deputy Regional Director; Aida Oliver, Regional Chief of Planning; and Bastiaan van t'Hoff
- 3) Discussion on UN coherence with Thomas Bergman-Harris, Senior UN Coherence specialist
- 4) Meeting with Enrique Delamonica, Social and Economic Policy Adviser
- 5) Meetings with country representatives:
 - a) Susana Sóttoli (Mexico);
 - b) Paul Martin (going from Colombia to Peru)
 - c) María-Jesús Conde (going from Nicaragua to Dominican Republic).

Visit to Brazil and Argentina, 17-26 November, 2010

(Fortaleza, 17-19 November; Buenos Aires, 20-23 November; Brasilia, 23-25 November; Rio de Janeiro, 25-26 November)

A) Fortaleza

- 1) The UNICEF Fortaleza team, including Ana Márcia Lima, Communications Specialist; Rui Aguiar, Programme Specialist; and Francisca Maria Andrade, Programme Specialist.
- 2) Interviews with the President of the Mayors' Association of Ceará and a mayor who has been a multiple winner of the Municipal Seal
- 3) Interview with the State Secretary of Education
- 4) Interviews with the IPREDE team, including Sullivan Mota, President; and Adolfo Férrer, Coordinator for Administration and Finance.

B) Buenos Aires

- 1) The UNICEF Argentina Country Management Team and other staff, including Andrés Franco, Representative; and Ennio Cufino Svitone, Deputy Representative
- 2) Individual discussions with staff members
- 3) Meeting with Martin Santiago Herrero, Resident Coordinator of the UN System.

C) Brasilia

- 1) Meetings with Marie Pierre Poirier, Representative

- 2) Discussions with the team focusing on the Semi-Arid Platform, led by Salete Silva, Semi-Arid coordinator in Brasilia, and Ana Márcia Lima and with the Platforms Support Group
- 3) Meeting with Márcio Corrêa, Coordinator for Multilateral Cooperation, Brazilian Agency for Cooperation
- 4) Review discussions with Márcio Carvalho, Mario Volpi and Denilson....

D) Rio de Janeiro

- 1) Interviews with Luciana Phebo, Chief of Field Office; and Jacques Schwarzstein, Basic Services Specialist
- 2) Meeting with technical partners from CEDAPS (Katya), Bern TV and the Municipal Secretariat of Health and Civil Defense (viviani?)
- 3) Meeting with the Municipality: Ricardo Henriques, Secretary for Social Welfare and Human Rights; Pedro, Carol, Adriana
- 4) Interview with Pedro Spedale, Under-Secretary for International Relations for the State of Rio de Janeiro
- 5) Meeting with corporate partners: Evalda Maciel Manager for Social Programmes for PETROBRAS; and Fabio Baissiano and Renato Wilmersdorfer of the Prudential.

Visit to Lima, Peru (Regional Management Team Meeting), 22-26 February, 2011

- 1) Discussions with Bastian van t'Hoff, Regional Chief of Monitoring and Evaluation
- 2) Presentation and Discussion with full RMT
- 3) Discussion with Melva Johnson, Deputy Representative, Peru
- 4) Interview with Maki Kato, Social Policy Specialist; Américo Pillman Velásquez, UNICEF Coordinator in Vantanilla; and Enrique Delgado, UNICEF Consultant for Ventanilla

Visit to Mexico and Nicaragua, 8-18 March, 2011

A) Mexico City

- 1) Introductory meeting with Susana Sottoli, UNICEF Representative
- 2) Meeting with Programme team on sub-national work.
- 3) Meeting with Margarita Griesbach, Founder and Director General of the Office for the Defense of the Rights of the Child (A non-Governmental organization.)
- 4) Meeting with Monica....and Manuel... from the Federal Education Office providing services for adolescents in the urban context.

B) Mérida

- 1) Meeting in Mérida with the President of the Yucatán Supreme Court and magistrates working on Juvenile Justice
- 2) Meeting with Guillermo Alonso and staff of IEPAAC
- 3) Meeting with Jaime Novelo, Director of Indigenous Preschool Education
- 4) Meeting with Lucina Gutiérrez, the CONAFE delegate to the State of Yucatán

C) San Cristobal/Tuxtla Gutiérrez

- 1) Interview with Mónica Bucio, UNICEF Liaison Officer for Chiapas
- 2) Interview with Mariana...UNDP Deputy Head of UN House, San Cristobal
- 3) Meeting with Javier Albañez, State Secretary of Education for Chiapas and his team
- 4) Meeting with Isabel de Sabines, President of DIF, Chiapas; Elizabeth..., Director of DIF, Chiapas and team; and Alejandra Soriano, Director of the Civil Registry in Chiapas

D) Managua

- 1) Introductory meeting with Maria Machicado, acting UNICEF Representative and José Ramón Espinoza, Programme Specialist for HIV/AIDS and adolescence.
- 2) Meeting with Ramón Canales, Director General of the Secretariat for the Development of the Caribbean Coast (SDCC)
- 3) Above meeting continued with the presence of Matilde Mordt, Assistant Resident Representative, UNDP along with other UNDP staff and Elinor Alvarado of SDCC
- 4) Internal UNICEF meeting to discuss with Harold Campos, Consultant and specialist on the Caribbean coastal areas
- 5) Interview with Carlos Alemán, President of the Regional Council of RAAN
- 6) Meeting with Pablo Mandeville, UN Resident Coordinator

E) Bilwi

- 1) Meetings with Mara Rivas, Coordinator of the Regional Government (GRAAN); Centureano Knight, Director of the Sector Planning; and Danny Wilson, ???

Annex 4: Criteria and Recommendations for the East Asia and Pacific Region (from the Woodhouse report, 2006)

5.1 there are several considerations that must be taken into account during the CPMP and budgeting process in order to maximally cost effectively determine whether or not a sub national UNICEF presence is justified and if so of what type and with what functions. The relative importance of each of these considerations will vary from country to country and may change over time. The final determination of country office and sub national presence cannot be reduced to the application of a set of mathematical criteria but instead requires the application of mature and experienced senior level judgment taking into account all relevant variables. Some of the most important considerations seem to be as follows – especially the first 2!

5.1.1 The state of development of the country and strategic intent of the country programme. All country programmes should have elements of service delivery, capacity building and advocacy .the key strategic aim must be to maximise synergy between these 3 approaches and to get the balance right in response to country conditions and opportunities (which vary from area to area!). The poorer the country the greater the likelihood of a focus on service delivery. The poorer the country the greater the likelihood that the management capacity of government and other partners will be limited thus the greater the justification for UNICEF to have a sub national field presence which emphasizes support to implementation, monitoring, technical advice and capacity building. Conversely the richer the country the greater the opportunities for UNICEF to play an advocacy role to leverage policies and resources for children. Many of the most useful UNICEF interventions require a multi sectoral approach involving several government sectoral ministries working together and often with NGO and other civil society partners. The promotion of multi sectoral approaches is usually much easier at local levels than nationally.

5.1.2 The degree of decentralization of governance particularly fiscal and political decentralization. The more the amount and proportion of governments and civil society resources that is at the discretion of sub national levels of government the greater the justification for UNICEF to have a sub national presence that can promote the development of value added models and to plug into power structures to implement advocacy networking and other leverage strategies to mainstream them.

5.1.3 The degree to which civil society existing and potential partners presence and power is also decentralized will also help determine the justification for UNICEF to follow suit. This may particularly be the case with academic partners; media, religious bodies/individual influential religious leaders; professional associations; rotary/lions clubs etc; private sector partners and NGO's.

5.1.4 Significant internal disparities within the country. The greater the degree of differences in the situation of children the greater the justification for a sub national programme focus and corresponding staff presence. Any ethnic differences and differences in social structures and methods of promoting local community participation are also important.

5.1.5 Size of the country and associated logistics issues. The larger the country and the greater the time and costs involved in internal travel especially to geographic areas of programme focus the greater the justification for UNICEF to have a sub national presence. It should be noted that the poorer the country and therefore the likely magnitude of UNICEF presence the less reliable internal travel systems are likely to be incurring delays and dangers for country based staff trying to cover remote areas from the capital city. Security issues are important as travellers from capital cities are likely to have a less accurate appreciation of local security situations compared with people living locally.

5.1.6 The additional costs or savings in having a sub national presence. It is the MARGINAL rather than the ABSOLUTE cost or saving of having a presence that must be calculated including office rent, transport and admin and security costs as well as initial installation costs.

5.1.7 The interests of donors in supporting a UNICEF sub national presence.

5.1.8 The attitude on the part of key government interlocutors in having a UNICEF sub national presence.

5.1.9 Security concerns. The degree to which internal security is a concern the greater the caution that must be exercised in establishing a sub national presence.

5.1.10 The degree of decentralization of other UN agencies particularly UNDG agencies. The greater the decentralized presence of these agencies .the greater the potential for both substantive and administrative (common premises etc) cooperation.

6. Recommendations

Most recommendations are self evident corollaries of the observations made above as well as in the individual country reports. However some of them are worth reiterating explicitly! The most important recommendations I want to make are

6.1 That any decision on whether or not to establish, close or modify any sub national presence must be based on an objective analysis which must be country specific. I believe that the 10 criteria proposed in para 5.1 above should form the basis for this analysis. It could be adopted globally and incorporated into revised CPMP methodology as well as the next set of budget guidelines.

6.2 Analyses should be carried out in all EAPR countries that have sub national presence to determine any barriers to their effectiveness. Para 5.3 above might be used a starting point checklist although there may be additional barriers that need to be assessed. Country reps might be urged to devise solutions to overcome barriers and to report back on them in a side meeting at RMT for everyone benefit including globally. Additionally, and perhaps of even greater potential importance is the need to do a "positive" analysis of what more could be done to maximize the contribution of sub-national presence.

6.3 A rigorous analysis should also be done to analyse the cautions outlined in para 5.5 Above again on a country specific basis. Corrective actions can also then be planned to deal with them.

6.4 Countries that do not yet have any sub national presence should be encouraged to assess potential cost benefit. Philippines and China might particularly encouraged to do so as I believe that application of the 10 criteria in

5.1 might lead to conclusions on the need for sub national presence. Both country representatives I believe share this view. The main point however is the need for a careful analysis based on facts.

6.5 I recommend that country offices should be able to recommend modifying their sub national structure based on an objective application of the 10 criteria proposed above and that the CPMP process/regional directors approval be easily forthcoming providing there are no foreseen cost increases if amortised over a 5 year period i.e. country offices should as a matter of principle encouraged to promote greater cost effectiveness and increasing sub national presence may be one way of achieving this!

6.6 A propos of observation 5.3 above I recommend that CMT's be encouraged to work closely with staff association executive committees to look at ways and make recommendations to improve accurate communications throughout offices particularly from sub national offices and to otherwise overcome barriers to their effectiveness.

6.7 In proposing sub national presence addition or modification country representatives need to pay particular attention to clearly spelling out the exact role of the sub national office and its

exact relationship with the country office .of special concern is clarity on the degree to which UNICEF country programming is "bottom up" within country programme guidelines. Similarly it is of vital importance to think through and specify reporting and supervisory arrangements.

6.8 For those offices with an established sub national presence of some magnitude e.g. Indonesia, Cambodia, Myanmar an internal rotation policy and procedure should be put in place as a means of promoting staff motivation, productivity and equity. Within this context it is also important that conscious steps be taken to recruit "high flyers" into sub national positions and to provide sub national staff with learning opportunities especially programme field observation and analysis capabilities.

6.9 The current guidelines for changes in organizational structure (*CFIDFAMI2002/001* dated 22 March 2002) should be re-written to incorporate the content of this report (in distilled form!). Particular attention should be paid to distinguishing between different types of sub-national presence. There are at least 3 types of presence. The first, independent zone offices along the lines of the Indonesia or India zone offices. The establishment of such offices might be justified in the case of large populous countries with substantial potential for bottom-up multi-sectoral programming plus local level advocacy and partnership development. A second, smaller outpost offices along the lines of the Cambodia or Myanmar model or Indonesia Eastern Indonesia outposts which might be justified in the case of poorer countries or regions with strong service delivery type programmes having a focus on field monitoring; support to implementation and reporting. A third type of presence might be project specific consultancy services with individuals attached to counterpart offices.

6.10 Apropos of observation 5.5.1. above, I recommend that the existing *CPMP/IB* guidelines be amended to mandate a zero based assessment & analysis of the need for sub-national presence in the light of each proposed new country programme, i.e. that are element of CPB be an in-depth review of the need for subnational presence to effectively implement the programme including a critical assessment of any existing sub-national presence. Additionally it would be useful to do an assessment of the contribution of sub-national presence as part of MTR's.

Annex 5: Criteria and Guidance on when and why to establish a Zone Office from the Preliminary Summary of Observations on an Audit of the Management of Zone Offices, 2011.

The Programme Policy and Procedure Manual (PPPM) is largely silent on the subject of zone offices, other than to stipulate that the organizational structure intended to implement the country programme should be clearly articulated in the Country Programme Management Plan (CPMP) and reviewed during the Mid-Term Review (MTR) process. The programme instruction concerning the development of the CPMP (*CFIPDIPRO/2010-001*) states that the Regional Director has the responsibility to review the CPMP to ensure that "the management structure is organized in the most efficient way to maximize achievement of planned results, both in terms of internal efficiency and considering possible synergies with other UN agencies and other UNICEF offices in the region."

The only official guidance to both country and regional offices from headquarters on criteria to be considered for the establishment of a zone office is contained within the above-mentioned 2002 budget guideline (*CFIDFAMI2002/001*). This document lists possible reasons as being because of the political environment, the degree of government decentralization, security and logistics, and for the purpose of cooperation with UN and other agencies. A brief check list is also provided concerning administrative decisions that need to be made and the then suggested accountabilities for such changes. While this is a useful document, it is by definition a budget document and does not attempt to go into detail concerning the various criteria.

The absence of adequate criteria and guidance has been recognized for some time by the regional offices. In 2006 the EAP regional office commissioned an "Inquiry into UNICEF's Sub-National Structures and Functioning in the East Asia & Pacific Region". The inquiry, undertaken by Stephen J. Woodhouse, examined the potential and given reasons for the establishment of zone offices in the region and concluded that there were ten commonly cited criteria, with the most important being the state of development of the country (as the weaker the government capacity the greater requirement for UNICEF intervention and a physical presence) and the degree of decentralization of fiscal and political government.

The report concluded that "any decision on whether or not to establish, close or modify a sub-national presence must be based on an objective analysis which must be country specific". This analysis should be based upon the ten given criteria. The report recommended that this analysis and the criteria be communicated and used as future budget and organization guidance by UNICEF: this recommendation was not followed up on and most country offices are unaware of this report.

The complete list of criteria presented by the 2006 EAPRO report was as follows:

- i) The state of development of the country
- ii) The degree of decentralization of fiscal and political government
- iii) The degree of decentralization of civil society and other partners
- iv) The existence of significant internal disparities within a country
- v) The size of a country and logistical issues
- vi) The marginal cost or savings involved in having a sub-national presence
- vii) The interests of donors in a sub-national presence
- viii) The attitude of government to a UNICEF sub-national presence
- ix) Security concerns
- x) The degree of decentralization of other UN agencies

Responses to the audit survey and questions posed during this audit have confirmed both the veracity of the above 2006 criteria and the emphasis on the first two criteria. In addition, respondents noted the following potential justifications:

- i. Situational awareness can benefit from a bottom-up awareness of conditions, rather than from reported data streams.
- ii. A local presence cements local alliances and reduces programme risk, both through closer communication, better information gathering, and through the ability to undertake more effective programme monitoring.
- iii. A sub-national presence facilitates the generation of location specific ideas and solutions.
- iv. A physical presence in certain cases can add credibility to UNICEF's mandate, both with government and civil society organizations.
- v. Capacity building at local level is aided by increased local contact.
- vi. A local presence can allow the option of a bottom-up advocacy strategy to complement a national advocacy strategy.
- vii. A local presence helps to address and to advertise the needs of marginalized children in remote areas or in areas receiving little or no central government attention. Zone offices therefore provide an equity based imperative.
- viii. A local office enables UNICEF staff members to develop an increased awareness and sensitivity to local cultural issues.
- ix. Good results in remote local areas have a greater capacity to influence replication at national level, and local offices assist in this process.

With regard to geographical justification, respondents were keen to point out that whilst important, absolute distance could in many countries be of secondary importance when compared to time travelling. In addition, there were several countries where both terrain and climate made it important that a sub-office presence was maintained in locations that although unreachable for long periods might on paper appear to be geographically close to a country office.

Annex 6: Preliminary Audit Summary Key Zone Offices Risks and Opportunities:

Key Zone Office Risks and Opportunities

During the audit, audit surveys; questionnaires and on occasion meetings allowed a relatively high number of country and regional offices the opportunity to comment on the UNICEF governance and control environment associated with zone office management, as well as to indicate key risks and opportunities. Many country and regional offices were very helpful and cooperative in this regard, evidencing the importance attached by many senior managers within UNICEF to this subject. The most significant or most frequently raised issues are listed below.

Potential Opportunities/Benefits

- i. Improved situational awareness as information gathering can benefit from a bottom-up awareness of conditions, rather than or in addition to third-party reported data streams.
- ii. A local presence cements local alliances and reduces programme risk, both through closer communication, better information gathering, and through the ability to undertake more effective programme monitoring.
- iii. Local offices can better facilitate the generation of location specific ideas and solutions.
- iv. A physical presence in certain cases can add credibility to UNICEF's mandate, both with government and with civil society organizations.
- v. Capacity building at a local level is aided by increased local contact.
- vi. A local presence can allow the option of a bottom-up advocacy strategy to complement a national advocacy strategy.
- vii. A wider career development and training environment can be developed for national staff members.
- viii. Emergency preparedness.
- ix. The provision of more secure communications facilities and accommodation for staff members operating in insecure environments.
- x. UN coherence.
- xi. A local presence helps to address and to advertise the needs of marginalized children in remote areas or in areas receiving little or no central government attention. Zone offices therefore provide an equity based imperative.
- xii. A local office enables UNICEF staff members to develop an increased awareness and sensitivity to local cultural issues.
- xiii. Good results in remote local areas have a greater capacity to influence replication at national level, and local offices assist in this process.
- xiv. Increased visibility for UNICEF

- xv. Helpful in assisting with donor visits and reports, in addition to assisting in fundraising by added credibility at the fundraising stage with donors.

Potential Risks:

- i. A long-term commitment: regardless of whether an exit strategy and short-term objectives are set the reality is that a country office will come under enormous practical pressures to resist closing a zone office, including a lack of management time to manage the closure of an office.
- ii. Increased rigidity: it may be easier to adapt and to try different responses from a single country office base, such as outposted individuals etc, rather than to be tied to existing physical zone offices.
- iii. A lack of flexibility in programmatic decision-making due to pressure to focus programme activity on geographic areas or populations because of a zone office presence rather than purely objective selection criteria.
- iv. A physical presence can represent a political statement, particularly in countries with 'competing' geographic or ethnic factions.
- v. The tendency for what may have started as small sub-offices to grow and acquire increased administrative staff members and to slowly and intentionally or unintentionally develop into a more major financial commitment.
- vi. A risk that a zone office might develop local programme objectives that could be out of tune with country office programme objectives.
- vii. The risk that other parties may perceive UNICEF to have developed a too costly administrative structure.
- viii. The existence of zone offices can create an additional administrative and managerial burden on the country office, as well as increasing the total resources in a country spent on administration.
- ix. The potential for the country office structure to grow to the point where an existing management team cannot realistically manage or keep on top of all programme and support risks and management functions.
- x. The potential for conflict or competition to develop between zone offices and a country office.
- xi. An additional security risk and administrative burden. Potential for very high MOSS compliance costs. It may also be safer from a security perspective to travel on an ad hoc basis rather than have a permanent base.
- xii. Insufficient guidance from technical sections at the country office level, leading to inappropriate decisions at the zone office level.
- xiii. Continuing a "business as usual" approach at a zone office level when the country programme objective is to move towards upstream advocacy work.
- xiv. Zone offices are often in difficult locations, leading to a reduced pool of potential staff members from whom candidates can be selected. This can potentially result in the recruitment of lower caliber staff.
- xv. Increased risks of fraud (financial and supply related) and loss of cash due to weaker supervision and management.

xvi. Lack of government permission for communications methodologies.

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