

Evaluation Report

Thematic Evaluation of UNICEF's Response to Decentralization in East Asia and the Pacific: 2006-2012

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Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AWP	Annual Work Plan
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CO	Country Office
CPAP	Country Programme Action Plan
CPD	Country Programme Document
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
EAPRO	East Asia and Pacific Regional Office
ECD	Early Childhood Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KI	Key Informant
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGUs	Local Government Units
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoRES	Monitoring Results for Equity System
MTR	Mid-Term Review
MTSP	Medium Term Strategic Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RO	Regional Office
ROMP	Regional Office Management Plan
ROSA	Regional Office for South Asia
RMT	Regional Management Team
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Executive Summary

This regional thematic evaluation attempts to (i) assess UNICEF’s strategies and interventions geared towards the realization of the rights of children and women in decentralizing environments in the East Asia and Pacific region; and (ii) identify strategic issues and options for UNICEF’s future interventions. The specific objectives of this evaluation are to (i) assess the extent to which UNICEF’s strategies, implicit or explicit, aimed at achieving results for children in decentralizing environments are relevant and effective; (ii) distill good practices and lessons learned from UNICEF’s engagement in decentralizing environments, especially in the areas of capacity development, policy advocacy, and partnerships; and (iii) formulate recommendations on strategic issues and options with a view to improving UNICEF’s strategies and interventions geared towards the realization of “all rights for all children” in decentralizing environments.

UNICEF has been responding to decentralization in all the countries in the region. Available reports and studies, by and large, suggest that the responses have contributed to positive impacts on the lives of children. In evaluating the organization’s response to decentralization efforts more specifically, three points are important to bear in mind. *One*, the outcomes for children in the context of decentralization have differed from country to country. They have been affected by the vastly different levels of human development and the political context in particular has played a crucial role in determining the impact of UNICEF’s responses, as is the case for all actions for children in the region and globally. *Two*, UNICEF has attempted to capitalize on the high credibility it enjoys in the region with national and local governments as well as non-governmental organizations and the private sector to influence the decentralization processes in favour of outcomes for children. And *three*, UNICEF’s responses to decentralization have been evolving over the years, as UNICEF Country Programmes are characteristically opportunistic and flexible, adapting to changing socioeconomic and political contexts and demands from governments and other stakeholders. This makes the situation complex, and has implications for both the generalizability as well as the definiteness of the evaluation findings.

This evaluation has many dimensions of a formative evaluation which is also developmental in nature. It attempts to document and capture strategies that are themselves evolving and varied in contexts that are also evolving and varied. Given this, rather than, as evaluators, select apriori and retrospectively a set of theories and test them, the evaluation attempts to elucidate both the strategic thinking guiding work at different levels and the outcomes of that thinking. Put another way, the evaluation uses the data gathered to compare outcomes described with the needs of marginalized children – using multiple experiences as the reference point rather than a reconstructed programme theory. Accordingly, the evaluation adopts a mixed method design that includes case studies, document review, key informant interviews and survey. The design was selected as being able to generate credible, useful, findings within the constraints of time, travel, and other limitations.

The main findings of the evaluation are summarized below:

Finding 1: UNICEF’s responses in the region appear to be well aligned with and relevant to both the national context as well as government’s priorities of decentralization.

This is to be expected – given that UNICEF’s country programmes are developed in consultation with and formally approved by the national governments. Also, several respondents highlighted the common practice of undertaking joint planning exercises with Government counterparts across sectors at the national and sub-national level. To that extent, this finding confirms a minimum expectation, that, by and large, the programming processes are contextualized, and that staff at all levels engage in planning with their counterparts in the country.

Finding 2: UNICEF has neither laid down an explicit regional strategy nor has it encouraged Country Offices to develop long-term country-specific strategies on decentralization.

Despite the absence of an explicit strategy, most of the respondents rate UNICEF strategies and responses as being ‘appropriate’ or at least ‘somewhat appropriate.’ How does one interpret this rating? Five observations. One, the absence of an understood or explicit strategy does not appear to be deliberate and intentional. Two, working with implicit strategies or emergent strategies could be an advantage. It gives the space to Country Offices to respond to their contexts; it allows for nimbleness; and it avoids overly bureaucratizing work. Three, while there isn’t always an implicit or intended strategy, there is clearly emergent strategy in all offices. However, there has been insufficient discussion on (i) whether particular offices will directly work on decentralization or not; and (ii) whether support for decentralization should not be a priority in some contexts. Four, UNICEF’s messaging on decentralization is confusing. It has not been able to clarify whether it is committed to focus on and work towards decentralization per se, or rather on improving the rights of children and women in a range of contexts using context appropriate strategies. Five, UNICEF staff is not always able to distinguish between working *on* decentralization and working *in* contexts that are decentralized or decentralizing. These are two different things. Such lack of clarity creates fuzziness around intended outcomes.

Finding 3: The capacity to implement or manage programmes, more than knowledge, is perceived as a constraint in responding to decentralization within UNICEF that has adversely affected effectiveness.

Knowledge is not perceived as a primary capacity challenge facing UNICEF. UNICEF staff at all levels believes that the capacity to implement or manage programmes is the more significant constraint. While many external factors beyond the control of UNICEF limit the capacity to implement or manage programmes, staff cited limited budgets and human resource capacity, and not knowledge, as the main internal factors.

Finding 4: Staff assess support and capacity of more centralized levels within UNICEF as being *weaker* than what is available at their level.

Several factors could account for these ratings. They could be the result of structural factors that limit or weaken the ability of staff at more centralized levels to be seen as providing support to those at more decentralized levels. This could be expected given that the primary thrust of UNICEF’s work has traditionally been on delivering outcomes for children in the field.

Finding 5: A majority of Zonal Office and Country Office staff rates the technical and strategic support on decentralization provided by the Regional Office as ‘poor’ or ‘very poor.’

Twelve out of 15 respondents rated Regional Office technical support on decentralization as fair, poor, or very poor. This could be due in part to the lack of awareness on the role of the Regional Office – that the RO is expected to respond to requests and also proactively offer guidance even when requests are not there, in addition to its oversight and wider knowledge-cum-learning and partnership roles.

Finding 6: Four inherent tensions in UNICEF internal programming and ways of working affect the organization’s capacity to respond to decentralization, and have limited its effectiveness.

Four types of tensions have adversely affected the effectiveness of UNICEF’s responses.

These are: Tension A – between the need for deep local knowledge in decision making and the belief that strategy formulation capabilities reside in those with global knowledge;

Tension B – between the need for long term understanding and leadership continuity and frequent transfer of decision makers every few years; Tension C - between the need for

interdisciplinary knowledge about governance, administration and the political economy and UNICEF’s traditional ways of focusing on sectoral domains and working in silos; and

Tension D – between the need for locally contextualized strategies when decision making tends to be centralized.

Finding 7: Four factors in particular, internal to UNICEF, appear to account for these tensions that limit the effectiveness of UNICEF’s response. UNICEF does not have a comparative advantage in addressing issues of governance. Decentralization is not a historical or current strength of UNICEF.

- a) Staff competencies are not appropriate and adequate for responding to decentralization. UNICEF has sector driven experts, but not necessarily people who can influence policy and thinking. UNICEF does not necessarily have staff that is relevant to middle income countries, that can dialogue, negotiate, and influence policies at the national level, and that can think much more cross-sectorally.
- b) There are shortcomings in UNICEF’s ability to manage its human resources both in terms of national or international policy staff for effective support to decentralization. The mobility of international staff creates challenges; most of the section chiefs are international professionals and need to learn about local planning and budgeting processes and decentralization in general; many national staff do not have the ability to influence or engage in public dialogue. UNICEF has no coherent policy of leadership management or transition; and there is little synchronization between leadership hiring and program cycles during a management transition.
- c) UNICEF, many respondents feel, has become process-heavy and very inward-looking. At the same time, UNICEF is fairly centralized in its own efforts to respond to decentralization

Finding 8: Two approaches within UNICEF’s overall programme strategies that are most uniformly regarded as ‘successful’ or ‘appropriate’ in addressing decentralization are (i) strengthening the generation and use of data; and (ii) influencing policies through pilots. Capacity building efforts came out less clearly as being effective.

That capacity building efforts came out less clearly as being effective may simply reflect the many difficulties of and the long term nature of capacity strengthening. As brought out in previous evaluations of UNICEF's capacity building work, it is also perhaps easier to identify UNICEF's role in modifying a particular policy or shifting the policy discourse than establishing that capacity was strengthened after an intervention.

Finding 9: Deficiencies in the results framework developed and used by UNICEF have been a factor affecting the quality of planning, monitoring and implementation of responses to decentralization as well as the ability to evaluate effectiveness.

Almost all Country Offices have responded to processes of decentralization underway in the respective countries. However, many of the decentralization initiatives supported by UNICEF do not have well-defined statements of results that are backed by appropriate indicators and markers of progress. Outcome statements frequently tend to be very general, unclear, not entirely relevant and not easy to measure at decentralized levels. Often, baseline data are not readily available to assess progress against targets for output and outcome indicators. These deficiencies are often compounded by a weak in-country national system of data collection and general system over-load.

Finding 10: Inadequate attention paid to design, resourcing and implementation components of decentralization responses have tended to adversely affected sustainability.

UNICEF's responses in support of decentralization have tended to be sustained when Country Offices have (i) worked simultaneously with both national and local governments; (ii) supported the national governments to develop legislative frameworks that ensure entitlements for children; (iii) nurtured effective partnerships with the Government, community-based organizations (CBOs) and communities; (iv) developed local level data and evidence gathering systems; (v) introduced innovative and appropriate methodologies and approaches that can track progress and be replicated. On the other hand, considerations of sustainability have been compromised by (i) the absence of a well-articulated long-term strategy and approach; (ii) insufficient risk analysis, (iii) poor advocacy to promote broad-based ownership; (iv) the inability to link efforts in sectors to a broader national programme of decentralization; and (v) unrealistic timelines for pilots to be scaled-up nationwide. Sustainability has also been adversely affected when resource implications – especially financial and human - have not been fully factored in, and capacity-building strategies within government and among non-state actors have not been carefully thought through.

Finding 11: UNICEF has built good working relations with a number of national governments on issues of decentralization. However, it has been less successful in establishing strong linkages in this area with other UN agencies, sectoral line ministries and sub-national levels of government.

UNICEF's links with federal Governments have been particularly strong, based on a long history of cooperation in many countries. However, UNICEF has not always made the most of its proximity with the Government to systematically and comprehensively push the agenda of decentralization within sectors, particularly with line ministries and the one dealing with local governance. With a few exceptions, UNICEF has also not capitalized

on the potential linkages it could have built with other United Nations agencies in support of its responses to decentralization.

The main conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation are summarized below:

Strategic recommendations:

- 1) Develop a framework: UNICEF should spell out a regional framework or strategy that recognizes the distinction and interplay between focusing programmatic work *ON* decentralization and programming *IN* decentralized or decentralizing contexts, and enables Country offices to make informed choices.
- 2) Apply an equity focus: An equity lens should be used to inform explicit decision making on (i) when to work directly *on* decentralization or to work *in* decentralizing contexts, and (ii) whether one or the other (or often a mix of both) is more strategic in achieving improvements for children and women and particularly the most marginalized.
- 3) Leverage opportunities strategically: Encouraging all countries to focus on a response to decentralization may not be the best use of UNICEF resources. UNICEF leadership management should explicitly identify the countries where work on decentralization is seen as being a critical lever.
- 4) Fine-tune country programmes: It is important for Country Offices to fine-tune the country programmes to enhance their strategic and operational effectiveness keeping in mind the context of decentralization and an agreed upon framework. This will, among other things, require: (i) paying more attention to setting clear outcomes and targets, (ii) recalibrating staffing and staff capacities, (iii) addressing shortcomings in hiring, transitions, and leadership, (iv) relying on evidence, (v) addressing various risks, including risks of reform (centre-periphery conflict), fiduciary risks, and risks to quality of services, and (vi) and formulating appropriate roles for zonal offices.
- 5) Focus in middle income countries: UNICEF should be more explicit and forward-looking in the nature of the evolving types of support that Middle Income countries require in the context of decentralization, and it should lay out a clear approach for meeting these needs. The response ought to be more revolutionary than evolutionary.

Knowledge-Oriented recommendations:

- 6) Enhance staff knowledge: UNICEF staff should be better equipped to speak to the issues of decentralization, understand implications, advocate effectively using evidence, make strategic interventions where useful, capture funding opportunities where these can contribute to improving the lives of children. Being effective requires more than technical knowledge and sectoral expertise. It requires the ability to more broadly engage in public dialogue and contribute to public reasoning on a wide range of social and economic policies that affect children.
- 7) Undertake a detailed policy study on piloting: The evaluation suggests a relative lack of sophistication in the analysis of how pilots and ground level experiences actually lead to policy change. UNICEF would benefit by examining in more detail (and with rigour) especially the pilot-to-policy model in order to draw out a more nuanced understanding of these processes. UNICEF should consider doing a detailed policy study to draw on examples of policy influence (or lack of it) from successful and unsuccessful models in order to develop theories of change and a framework of elements that matter for

influencing policy and to build deeper understanding and language around policy influence within UNICEF.

Process Oriented recommendations:

- 8) Involve the staff: UNICEF should revert back to the staff with the findings of this Report, and outline a process for engaging with and spelling out the concrete steps that are needed to address conclusions and findings of this evaluation.
- 9) Engage with findings: UNICEF management should lay out a process for engaging with and acting on the findings of this evaluation. The findings of this evaluation take UNICEF into deciding on strategy choices and priorities – something squarely in the realm of UNICEF leadership.

Clarifying responsibilities:

- 10) Clarify roles and responsibilities: The lack of clarity on roles and support function from Regional Office staff by Zonal Office and Country Office staff should be addressed. Greater clarity on the roles that Regional Office should play with respect to decentralization should be clearly communicated.

1. Introduction

Most countries within the East Asia and Pacific region, more so in recent years, have pursued decentralization reforms. Sectors of special relevance to children such as education, health and water, have been particularly affected by these processes. UNICEF's Evaluation Policy recommends periodic regional thematic evaluations as they "serve the Regional Management Team and partners in the assessment of regional strategies to help countries to address trans-boundary and shared regional issues and to mutually assist each other in achieving national goals and priorities".¹ With this intention, UNICEF EAPRO has commissioned a thematic multi-country evaluation of UNICEF's response to decentralization in the region.

1.1 Evaluation Purpose

The purposes of this regional thematic evaluation are²:

- to assess UNICEF's strategies and interventions geared towards the realization of the rights of children and women in decentralizing environments in the East Asia and Pacific region; and
- to identify strategic issues and options for UNICEF's future interventions.

The evaluation focuses particularly on the extent to which UNICEF's strategies in support of and responding to decentralization are aligned towards, and appropriate for, contributing to more equitable results for children. This is intended to help the Regional Management Team to better support responses to decentralization that help countries achieve national goals and priorities in ways that improve the lives of children, and particularly the most disadvantaged children.

Interviews with key advisers and UNICEF staff have helped clarify expectations from the evaluation with respect to both *learning and accountability*.³ For example, during the inception stage, key informants noted:

- "We need to understand whether we have pursued the decentralization agenda where we needed to, and whether the effort to focus on decentralization (in terms of children and equity) has been useful;"
- "We want to develop a framework for our own Regional Office technical support and for understanding the best way for Country Offices (COs) to work at the decentralized level"

¹Undertaking a regional thematic evaluation in the East Asia and Pacific region is grounded in the Regional Office Management Plan (ROMP) 2010-2011 for the Regional Offices for East Asia and the Pacific (EAPRO) and South Asia (ROSA). An agreement was reached during the joint EAPRO/ROSA RMT meeting in Beijing (1-4/7 November 2010) to "implement two [...] thematic evaluations in 2011 on capacity development and decentralization, within the context of disparity reduction and strategic partnerships." While the regional thematic evaluation on capacity development was conducted in 2011, an evaluation on decentralization did not take place due to reasons beyond the control of the Evaluation Unit. However, at EAPRO's Mid-Year Review (23 July 2012), Senior Management reiterated its commitment to undertake a regional thematic evaluation on decentralization during 2012.

² See Annex 1 – Relevant Excerpts from the Terms of Reference for the Evaluation.

³Festo Kavishe, Ada Ocampo, Mahesh Patel and Dan Toole informed the design of the evaluation through pre-design interviews that explored in more detail the questions originally laid out in the evaluation TOR.

- UNICEF needs to ‘know whether to continue work in this area,’ noting that ‘it’s not a tight match for UNICEF.’

This is a particularly timely evaluation. Seven countries are carrying out their mid-term reviews this year (as they are half way through the 5-year Country Programmes) and six will do so next year. This evaluation offers a unique opportunity to inform the mid-term reviews and also the follow-on planning including the next Medium Term Strategic Plan.

1.2 Evaluation objectives

This evaluation takes account of and builds upon previous studies on decentralization undertaken by UNICEF in the East Asia and Pacific region. The specific objectives of this evaluation are:

- to assess the extent to which UNICEF’s strategies, implicit or explicit, aimed at achieving results for children in decentralizing environments are relevant and effective;
- to distill good practices and lessons learned from UNICEF’s engagement in decentralizing environments, especially in the areas of capacity development, policy advocacy, and partnerships; and
- to formulate recommendations on strategic issues and options with a view to improving UNICEF’s strategies and interventions geared towards the realization of “all rights for all children” in decentralizing environments.

The Regional Management Team and the Senior Management Team of EAPRO constitute the primary audience and main users of this evaluation. Country Office programme staff, regional advisers in EAPRO and staff within the wider organization as well as stakeholders are also expected to be users of this evaluation.

These possible uses and users have been kept in mind while conducting the evaluation and making choices about what to examine and the scope of recommendations.

1.3 Evaluation Context and Scope

Institutional changes driven by decentralization have important implications for UNICEF’s effort to influence policy processes. In particular, since the adoption of the Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) 2006-2013 including Focus Area 5, of which decentralization is a key thematic interest, UNICEF has focused on strengthening the capacities of States and societies in the design and implementation of social and economic policies, legislative measures and budgetary allocations that enable them to meet their obligations’ under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).⁴In addition, UNICEF’s recent re-focus on equity has drawn renewed

⁴ We gather that in an early priority-setting meeting, key UNICEF managers fought to get decentralization included as one of the core priorities, and eventually succeeded, in part because Country Office reports repeatedly mentioned capacity gaps in implementing their programs. There was a recognition that taking ‘all countries as equal’ didn’t make sense as UNICEF found that different sectors (for example, education and health) were being affected differently. A discussion began within the organization but staff often lacked the ability to follow up or did not have the necessary background to deal with issues of governance.

attention to the need to guarantee “all rights for all children everywhere” by prioritizing the most deprived and to demonstrate results in this respect.

This evaluation does not assume that perspectives on decentralization as well as strategies of decentralization are uniform. The contexts and the political determination to decentralize varies from one country to another as do UNICEF’s responses. Also, in some countries, the attempt at decentralization is old; in others, like Myanmar, it is quite recent.

Decentralization reforms have varied and the nature of the reforms pursued has not been linear (from centralized to decentralized) nor on a known and steady trajectory (of less to more). Rather, countries are engaged in different patterns of decentralization and recentralization. These processes have varied in terms of the types and levels of decentralization. Though there are multiple framings (and many hybrids of them) of decentralization, this evaluation shall use the typology of political, administrative, fiscal and market decentralization, and the levels of deconcentration, delegation and devolution⁵ for categorizing particular interventions or contextual descriptions gathered during the study. Finally, it is important to note that decentralization processes have also varied by sector and by the nature of what is being decentralized. Thus, though this Report refers to decentralization or decentralizing contexts, it should be understood that this is a short-form for a nuanced and complex set of processes and terrains that are themselves in flux.

Decentralizing service delivery is undeniably a complex process which works differently in each sector and in each context. Decentralization involves inter-alia, re-assignment of responsibilities; shifting of decision making; allocation of financial resources; local planning and budgeting; improving local sectoral capacity and greater community involvement. If done well, decentralization, in theory, has the potential to improve equity, efficiency, accessibility, and accountability in public service provision, reaching the most disadvantaged at local level. Conversely, poorly implemented decentralization can result in shifting of responsibilities without resources, failures of service delivery, and accentuated regional inequalities. Although advancing child welfare is typically not the primary motivation behind decentralization, any improvements in public services point to the potential for meaningful and equitable results for children. However, similarly, any negative effects on public services point to the potential to weaken results for children.

The Terms of Reference note that “*the basic decentralization premise suggests that local governments, endowed with adequate resources, can provide the level and types of public services such as education, health and water that most closely reflect local demands.*” However this premise is also challenged. For example, one of the key informants noted that there is “an ideological supposition or assumption that decentralization is a good thing...that it brings decision making closer to the children.” However, the informant noted that decentralization has also been found to, “exacerbate national tensions – create local divisions” and lead to

⁵ D. Rondinelli, J. Nellis, and S. Cheema, “Decentralization in Developing Countries: A Review of Recent Experience”, World Bank Staff Working Paper 581, (Washington, DC, World Bank, 1984), cited in Hinsz, Patel, et al, “Effects of Decentralization on Primary Education: Phase I: A Survey of East Asia and the Pacific Islands, UNICEF Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 27 July 2006.

“corruption” in part because local governments “do not have the capacity to deliver the services.”

Against this backdrop, this evaluation assesses the merits of frameworks, strategies and approaches towards decentralization that UNICEF has pursued, with focus on the East Asia and Pacific Region. It covers the period from 2006 to mid-2012. In terms of geographical scope, the evaluation has targeted data collection on larger countries that have gone through decentralization processes. Though findings are expected to be use and interest to the Pacific Island Countries, these countries have been only partially covered by the interview and survey instruments and the detailed country level document analysis.

1.4 Evaluation criteria and questions

The TOR identifies the following key criteria for the evaluation:

Relevance:

- To what extent are UNICEF’s strategies and interventions appropriate for addressing the opportunities and challenges presented by decentralization?
- To what extent are UNICEF’s initiatives in decentralized environments in line with the organization’s strategic directions in particular with its recent equity re-focus?
- To what extent UNICEF’s interventions in decentralized environments are in line with key country priorities, international agreements and conventions (MDGs, Aid Effectiveness, CRC, CEDAW, etc.)?

Effectiveness:

- To what extent are UNICEF’s strategies and interventions in decentralizing environments (upstream/downstream, at central/local level etc.) contributing to the achievement of equitable results for children?
- To what extent has UNICEF’s presence at the sub-national level (field offices) contributed to the organization’s effectiveness in decentralizing environments?
- How are planned strategies and interventions adequate to support capacity deficiencies?
 - At national level to effectively address children issues through decentralization;
 - At local level to absorb responsibilities implied by decentralization.

Sustainability:

- To what extent and at what levels has UNICEF’s support helped creating an enabling environment to achieve equitable results for children in decentralizing environments?

Cross-cutting issues:

To what extent has UNICEF’s partnership approach been effective to better address and advocate for the rights of children and women at central and local level in the context of decentralization?

These broad evaluation questions have been further unfolded for purposes of the evaluation⁶.

⁶ See Annex 2 - Unfolding of Evaluation Questions

1.5 Evaluation Design and Methodology

This evaluation considered a theory of change approach. While such an approach was deemed unsuitable as the core basis of this evaluation for a few reasons some of the ideas from theory of change work did inform the evaluation. The term “theory of change” is used in many different ways. Here it is defined as a set of beliefs and assumptions about how and why an intervention will work. This is slightly distinct from the idea of ‘theories of change’ which imply that there can be a range of theories about how and why change occurs. The latter is certainly more useful in the context of this evaluation.

Instead of testing a theory of change, this evaluation uses the data and information gathered to compare outcomes described with the needs of marginalized children. It uses multiple experiences as the reference point rather than a reconstructed program theory. This is in line with feedback on the inception report, where one advisor noted, “an emphasis on policy would be misguided as it will be more interesting to look at success in programs on the ground.”

Challenges for testing a theory of change in this evaluation, included:

- Efforts to programme in decentralizing contexts in ways that benefit children and particularly the most disadvantaged children, have to be, by definition, varied, adapting, and emergent. These efforts are underway in contexts that are in flux, and do not also follow a clear and well-defined linear path. On the contrary, processes are seen to decentralize, re-centralize, and again decentralize, and that too differently by sector and locality. Having a linear program theory that can be applied and tested across multiple countries assumes that this is how programming was driven -which in turn seems unlikely (and necessarily so).
- UNICEF has not articulated a transparent, evidence-based theory of change (or rationale for intervening in certain ways over other in different types of contexts). There is no explicit strategy guiding the responses to decentralization. Indeed, this may be intentional or in itself strategic— allowing for nimbleness or contextualized responses given the dynamic context. Whether or not strategic, intentional or unintentional, retrospectively reconstructing theories of change for evaluation purposes, before data collection and analyses, poses the risk of them being interpretive, not necessarily linked to the change assumptions that were applied in the interventions being evaluated.
- It is likely that there may be different theories of change existing at different levels in UNICEF, between Country Offices and the Regional Office, and between zonal offices and Country Offices. As ones moves from the regional level to the capital of the country, and then to the zonal levels, views about how to programme in decentralizing contexts may vary along with the different contexts and differently disadvantaged groups within them.

Given the above, this evaluation, instead of selecting *a priori* and retrospectively a set of theories and testing them, attempts to elucidate both the strategic thinking guiding work at different levels and the outcomes of that thinking. In this way, the evaluation hopes to draw out the mix of theories of change at play. This is likely to help UNICEF move forward in weighing those multiple theories and working towards a more explicit strategy (if it is determined to be helpful)

including possibly articulating an evidence-based theory of change (or theories of change) that could be tested through future evaluations.

Given the nature of the area of enquiry (decentralization) and the fact that there is no common explicit strategy or framework, this evaluation has many dimensions of a formative evaluation which is also developmental in nature. The design intends to document and capture strategies which are themselves evolving and varied in contexts that are also evolving and varied. The different Country Offices can be seen as experimenting with different strategies in response to differently decentralizing contexts. This suggests a level of innovation within complex contexts. This evaluation is a first step towards mapping and documenting what are currently undocumented or implicit strategies and to begin generating ideas and documenting lessons on what has been working well or appears promising, and efforts that have not worked as well or as intended. The design thus intends to draw on documents and on UNICEF staff perspectives and experiences.

The evaluation design is a mixed-method design that includes case studies, document review, key informant interviews and a survey. The following data collection methods have been used:

Document review: This evaluation examines and draws from an extensive list of documentation and materials shared by UNICEF⁷. Several of these studies have covered similar ground to this planned evaluation. We intend to both build on past work and examine whether patterns of findings continue to be the same or whether the strategies, challenges, or strengths of UNICEF approaches are changing.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): Key informant Interviews were conducted with 12 Country Representatives from Cambodia, China, DPRK, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, The Philippines, Thailand, Timor Leste and Viet Nam)⁸;

Staff Survey: Three survey instruments were administered to the following⁹:

- 12 Deputy Representatives or Focal Persons from Country Offices.
- 8 Section Chiefs in the Country Offices
- 7 Heads of Zonal Offices in countries where applicable¹⁰

1.6 Evaluation Management

The Evaluation Team made of A.K.Shiva Kumar and Katherine Hay worked closely with and was guided by the Evaluation Manager, Ms. Ada Ocampo, Regional Evaluation Advisor. EAPRO extended support to help identify Key Informants and survey respondents and ensured that the questionnaires were filled out in time. A teleconference with the Reference Group (of stakeholders) helped to finalize the Inception report by February 2013. The Team conducted the interviews and administered the survey instruments between February 20-March 5; and

⁷ See Annex 3 – Preliminary Findings from a Rapid Review of Select Documents

⁸ See Annex 4 – Key Informant Interview guide

⁹ See Annex 5 – Survey Instruments

¹⁰ See Annex 6 for list of people interviewed and surveyed

presented the main findings to EAPRO staff in Bangkok on March 13, 2013. The Report has been finalized after receiving comments from the Reference Group.

1.7 Limitations of the Evaluation

The evaluation design has been selected as being able to generate credible, useful, findings within the constraints of time, travel, and other limitations. Notably the evaluation had to be completed within six weeks after the submission of the Inception Report and the approval of the design. Also, travel to field or Country Offices was not budgeted. Hence, the entire evaluation is desk-based.

Two other limitations are important to note. One, the evaluation findings are based entirely on a review of UNICEF documents, and interviews and surveys conducted with UNICEF staff. No external partners of UNICEF were contacted. Two, the evaluation was not informed by previous evaluation reports of efforts by UNICEF to respond to decentralization efforts in the region. Such evaluations have not been undertaken, regionally and at the country level.

2. Responses to Decentralization: The experience in the East Asia and Pacific Region

Levels of human development vary considerably across the countries within the region. For example, the under-5 mortality rate (U5MMR), in 2011, varied from 6 in Malaysia to 66 in Myanmar. There is almost a seven-fold variation in per capita incomes across the countries – with GNI per capita in 2011 varying from PPP\$ 2,230 in Cambodia to PPP\$ 15,650 in Malaysia. Two countries (Cambodia and Myanmar) still fall in the low income category, seven are lower middle income countries and two (China and Malaysia) are upper middle income countries. The political systems too differ across the region, with Cambodia, China, Lao PDR and Viet Nam having single-party systems. In 2010, elections were held in Myanmar for the first time in 20 years, and with President U Thein Sein heading an elected government since March 2011, it has brought to an end nearly 50 years of military rule.

Different countries have been adopting different approaches to decentralization, in relation to their political, geographical, cultural and historical settings. They have been implementing such policies at different speeds and with different impacts on human development. UNICEF's particular interest is in examining the nexus between decentralization and its impact on children. Only by understanding these inter-connections can UNICEF's response be better tailored to maximize the advantages and minimize the negative effects – for children.

UNICEF has been responding to decentralization in all the countries in the region. This is because, as key informants emphasized during the inception stage interviews, UNICEF wants to “ensure that basic rights and services are enhanced or maintained through a process of

decentralization,” particularly given that, “one could lose what are often good national norms as one devolves authority.” UNICEF’s response to decentralization has been shaped by the different contexts and levels of human development, by the framework for and commitment to decentralization that national governments have in place, and to the existence and capacity of non-governmental partners.

The outcomes on equity and lives of children are influenced by many dimensions of decentralization including governance, budgets and, service provision. For instance, the impact on children could be differentially affected by a number of factors including uneven implementation of central policies at the subnational levels, uneven allocation of resources to and between subnational levels, uneven presence of non-governmental and other community-based organizations, and insufficient participation of women in decision making.

UNICEF has approached decentralization in many ways. Clusters of action-responses to decentralization have included the following:

- build into the situation analysis, concerns of equity and well-being of children living in decentralized contexts or the concerns of disadvantaged groups of children as the basis for programming
- improve systems of local public administration and governance: This is done by initiating a dialogue on various centre-state-local issues such as sharing of central resources, strengthening local planning, and establishing local monitoring and evaluation processes to track progress.
- begin programming work on concerns affecting a specific population group and then expand the scope of work to addressing the underlying phenomenon itself at higher levels. This could include designing area-based programmes - working with local authorities wherever possible, taking advantage of autonomy and flexibility at local levels to promote community-based and inter-sectoral approaches. UNICEF has also started by addressing special concerns of children affected by, say, migration (such as trafficking, civil registration, children left behind, and education of migrant children) and gradually expanded the discourse to addressing the challenges of migration for the overall human development of the country.
- create new knowledge on how a particular phenomenon such as migration affects children. UNICEF, in collaboration with other partners, has commissioned research and studies, including primary data collection, to understand impacts and implications within countries and between countries.
- contribute to a wider discourse: On the basis of programme experience, specific knowledge and research, UNICEF has contributed to and influenced the wider discourse on many macro-issues (urbanization, migration, economic reforms, fiscal practices, and so on) – by drawing attention to the impact on children and women.

Country Offices have also responded to decentralization by functioning through a single office or, in some cases, by setting up zonal or sub-national offices. Setting up zonal offices cannot be strictly considered to be an ‘approach or strategy’ as many of them predate decentralization processes, due to geographical factors in large countries, or to specific needs (e.g. tsunami response). Where zonal offices exist, they are seen to play important role in programme implementation as they contribute to strengthening capacity-building, maintaining

communications with local bodies and improving coordination at the local level. While most respondents did highlight the importance of zonal offices in theory and often in practice, this was also one of the areas that was perhaps most imbued with diversity of views (often within as well as across individuals and levels of decision making).

Some caveats. It is beyond the scope of this study to reliably assess whether or which of these approaches is most effective or most efficient. UNICEF has not tested any of these approaches using designs that can speak to whether or not the approaches resulted in or contributed to certain outcomes, or whether those outcomes could have been achieved through other approaches. No systematic evaluations are available. Staff at all levels pointed to the need for more rigorous analysis of both successes and failures of different methods. Many staff indicated that UNICEF was weak in documenting good and poor practices and tracking and learning from outcomes.

This section synthesizes the lessons learned from the experience of UNICEF responses and approaches to decentralization in the region. It attempts to highlight ‘good practices’ that can inform future plans of work and action.

2.1 Three approaches

The countries in the region that UNICEF works in have all been decentralizing at different speeds and adopting different approaches. For instance, Country Office representatives during the interviews mentioned several examples of UNICEF’s work in decentralization. Illustrative examples include the following:

- Cambodia: The Country Office has worked with the Government to create a new law on decentralization and has a strategy of having a staff team working on decentralization
- China: The Country Office has been able to leverage its limited resources by successfully establishing the efficacy of pilots and scaling them up as part of the Government’s initiative.
- Indonesia: The Country Office has been involved in sub-national planning and budgeting.
- Myanmar: Following the establishment of a democratically elected government in 2011, the Country Office has begun working with the national government on decentralization
- The Philippines: The Country Office has been able to capitalize on the country’s long history of adopting participatory processes of bottom-up budgeting and analysis.
- Viet Nam: The Country Office has built on the national government’s commitment to decentralization and has undertaken several measures to promote socioeconomic reforms and decentralization.

Broadly speaking, UNICEF’s approaches and responses to decentralization can be grouped under three broad categories:

- Influencing policies through pilots
- Strengthening the generation and use of data as evidence
- Capacity building of stakeholders

2.1.1 Influencing policies through pilots: Respondents offered several normative citations of pilot-to-policy and scaling-up:

- “We need to use our rich experiences at the sub-national level to ensure that some of the reform and changes that are happening are more informed by good practices and pilots on the ground. We want the face of decentralization be even more child and poor friendly.”
- “Our hands-on experiences with these communities provide feedback to national level guidelines. Our engagement at the sub-national level will influence the national policy. So far this approach has worked. We need to do more.”
- “UNICEF’s focus is to bridge inequities by showcasing how policies need to be translated in terms of implementation in remote, poor, areas.”
- “UNICEF’s strength is a balanced approach in the upstream and downstream work. We have a huge advantage. We have two sides of the work. One is upstream work with the Ministry, working on capacity building. On the other hand we work with the communities. Our hands on approach in supporting communities and our equity approach of reaching out to the most vulnerable help us ‘be in touch’ and gives us a comparative advantage.”

Respondents gave several examples where this approach to advancing the rights of children was effective, including:

- a district level model on child friendly cities was adopted and scaled up by the national government;
- child protection system building model in one district was adopted nationally, contributing to the juvenile justice law;
- demonstrated approaches that decreased child mortality, increased access to early childhood education, and benefitted migrants were scaled up, and;
- a package of interventions and incentives pilot tested to encourage better service delivery and better uptake of maternal and child health services by rural mothers in select poverty counties (which led to an increase in hospital births and decreased maternal mortality) has been fully taken to scale by the Ministry of Health.

There were other examples including one of how work with communes and particularly efforts to identify female leaders had led to more women’s leadership within decentralization.

Almost everyone rated this effort of influencing policies through pilots as being effective. However, respondents also expressed concerns. Concerns included:

- the tendency within UNICEF to advocate without adequate evidence and systematic evaluations and pick up disconnected bits and pieces of examples to show that decentralization is working;
- the insufficiency of funding to rigorously test different equity-focused decentralization and de-concentration policy options.
- the absence of requisite staff competencies especially at the local levels; and
- a disconnect at times between planning, budgeting and implementation.

2.1.2 Strengthening the generation and use of data as evidence: Generating and using quality data were highlighted as good practice that has contributed to the positive impacts of decentralization on children. Improving data systems and their use was seen as being critical for

strengthening and informing the response to decentralization. Weak data systems were flagged as an issue in most country contexts that weakened the ability to work effectively on policy and ground-level implementation. Generating good quality data on child-related indicators, especially disaggregated by regions, locations and communities, was seen to significantly improve planning, monitoring and evaluation systems. This has been the experience, for instance, in China where a local mapping of the situation of children in select Western provinces has led to the setting up on an Expert Group to address specific concerns of children. More specifically, technical support for strengthening local capacities has helped to:

- leverage national budgets behind decentralization efforts through policy influence;
- establish monitoring systems;
- institute evaluation mechanisms for measuring results for children at the decentralized level;
- develop tools to capture citizen's feedback (including social audit tools); and
- share experiences across districts.

The following observations capture the benefits of good monitoring and evaluation systems:

- “... we are looking at how to incentive local government behaviour and then align the national level through a unified data monitoring system...unless you set up good monitoring systems decentralization will only lead to more corruption.”
- “supporting countries with baseline evidence in a way that helps them see geographical differences, situation monitoring, identifying emerging and equity issues, and key bottlenecks hindering positive impacts on children;”
- “evidence generation and use to advocate with government;’ reforms of monitoring and evaluation planning frames applied following participatory planning of the socio-economic development plan.”
- “We have focused a lot on documentation and research, both in terms of documentation and data gathering which we use to advocate with government and the private sector...We are also now trying to build capacity of partners in monitoring and evaluation. We are working with NGO partners and with governments. We have introduced MORES and are rolling that out so that our partners are able to monitor the work on the ground using an equity lens.”

Box – 1
Generating and Using Data:
Highlighting a ‘Good Practice’ from the Philippines

A respondent from the Philippines spoke of the many innovative and essential steps the Country Office had taken to generate and make better use of data for the benefit of children. He noted:

- We did a national mapping exercise using existing statistics. From that we identified areas that came out as most vulnerable. We chose regions where we believe that inequities are multiplied or entrenched and where the development lag is coupled with risk factors.
- We undertook a theory of change exercise to work with them, to identify results they would want to work on.
- We are not doing any pilots – we are doing scalable interventions and have put our program into a large program of the government.
- We can’t keep doing the old thing. It’s a bit early to say whether on the positive or negative side what is working or not working.
- But we want people to be comfortable in reviewing the pathways of change and the causes behind that and if things that have not worked.
- Within the theory of change there is a large incentive in documenting both positives and negatives.

2.1.3 Capacity building of stakeholders: UNICEF has supported a range of partners including local government duty bearers, civil society groups and other stakeholders. The two commonly cited interventions that have yielded positive outcomes are (i) capacity development of duty bearers; and (ii) establishing networks with other development partners and funding agencies at the local level. Such actions have taken the following forms:

- support to policy development at sub-national levels by adopting a more granular approach;
- support to government at the district level or decentralized level to better use resources allocated by Central government - work on local planning, local budgeting, and improve local service delivery;
- support to the development of local plans for children using sub-national level data generated to highlight inequities; and;
- support to creation of broad coalitions and specific partnerships with Ministries of Finance and other agencies that have a bearing on outcomes for children.

In some instances, UNICEF has supported national governments to create social service focal persons in provinces and districts, and contributed towards enabling the new functionaries to carry out their functions more efficiently and effectively.

Respondents identified many positive benefits of capacity-building including:

- Interventions at the local level help stakeholders better understand issues and challenges as well as trends affecting the wellbeing of children;

- Discussions with District Councilors have led to increased funds for specific programs such as early childhood development (ECD);
- The ability of duty-bearers to identify issues improves as does the capacity to deliver services, knowledge about how to plan and monitor, and even how to allocate resources to address issues;
- Strengthening staff capacity in localized health planning and budgeting helps with efficiency and sustainability of interventions.

At the same time, respondents also identified a number of constraints and challenges linked to capacity building, including:

- UNICEF, in a number of instances, had not addressed the issue of strengthening institutional capacity;
- UNICEF has often not used sufficient bottom-up planning modalities, as a result of which interventions supported and led by the central government do not fully respond to the needs to children and women;
- Many national governments simply do not want to devolve functions, finance and authority, and;
- There are several gaps at the local level including capacity gaps, insufficient delivery mechanisms, and inadequate sectoral coordination that limit the impact on children.

3. Main findings

Three features of UNICEF’s response to decentralization efforts by governments in the region are important to note as a backdrop to the main findings of this evaluation.

One, UNICEF enjoys high credibility in the region, and is regarded as an honest partner by both national and local governments. National governments continue to benefit from technical advice, research support, and in a limited number of cases, from supplies as well. Long years of country presence have enabled UNICEF to establish strong networks with non-governmental organizations and the private sector as well. The organization enjoys the reputation of being a long-standing champion of child rights and an action-oriented organization that strives to ensure maximum impact for children, especially those who are disadvantaged. The organization has used its advocacy and social mobilization competencies to mobilize resources and public action for the benefit of children.

Two, the political context in particular plays a crucial role in determining the impact of UNICEF’s responses to decentralization. As one respondent noted: “Global, regional, national, and local agendas are often different; so adapting [strategy] to decentralizing contexts is difficult.” Another KI remarked, “The decentralization scenario in the Philippines is quite complicated and has several layers. There is tension between provincial and municipal levels and a constant struggle in terms of municipal and provincial level authorities. There is a spectrum of institutions and they are differently synchronized.” A survey respondent noted, “In contexts where decision makers loathe to taking initiative, where the party line remains strong, and where bureaucratic procedures remain complex, it is difficult to see genuine government-

wide change. Seizing the opportunity of a decentralization reform is important and has great merit, but it is a long term investment that requires flexibility in approach.”

Three, given that UNICEF does not have an articulated decentralization strategy, the organization’s responses to decentralization have also been evolving over the years. A positive feature is the manner in which many UNICEF Country Offices have been opportunistic and flexible, adapting to the changing socioeconomic and political contexts and demands from governments. This adds to the complexity of the evaluation as it has implications for both the generalizability as well as the definiteness of the evaluation findings.

Discussed below are the main findings of the evaluation corresponding to the three criteria - relevance, effectiveness and sustainability – and also to cross-cutting issues of partnerships and evidence-based advocacy.

3.1 Relevance

Finding 1:
UNICEF’s responses in the region appear to be well aligned with and relevant to both the national context as well as government’s priorities of decentralization

The relevance of UNICEF’s actions has been was judged in terms of alignment with and response to the priorities of the national governments. The survey reveals that a majority of UNICEF staff feels that planning and responses at the country and zonal levels are, by and large, well-aligned with the national or zonal contexts of decentralization (see Table 1). This was reinforced through the (KIIs where staff indicated: “Our work plans are developed on the ground and developed with national and subnational levels of government. So we are aligned.”

Table 1: Ratings of UNICEF staff on the extent to which UNICEF’s Country Plans respond to the national context of decentralization		
	Number of respondents who gave a rating of UNICEF’s responses as being Somewhat to Very Responsive	Average Score [with 1 being ‘very responsive’ and 5 being ‘non-responsive’]
8 Deputy and Focal points On Country Plans	7	1.63
9 Zonal Office Managers On their plans	9	1.56
11 Section Chiefs On their section plans	11	1.45
Source: Survey administered as part of the evaluation		

The findings that UNICEF’s responses are well aligned with and relevant to the national context and government’s priorities are only to be expected – given that UNICEF’s country programmes are developed in consultation with and formally approved by the national governments. Also, several respondents highlighted the common practice of undertaking joint planning exercises across sectors at the national and sub-national level. Such joint exercises helped to improve

alignment, strengthen country ownership, and achieve buy-in at the national and sub-national level. Such processes have contributed to the better integration of child rights perspectives in local investment and development plans. To that extent, this finding confirms a minimum expectation, that, by and large, the programming processes are contextualized, and that staff at all levels engage in planning with their counterparts in the country. Given this, being responsive does not however imply that the response is appropriate or ideal from among a range of options and possible actions that can be taken. A key question is whether or not UNICEF's responses have been both highly relevant and effective.

3.2 Effectiveness

The overall effectiveness of UNICEF's response to decentralization has been affected by three factors: strategy, capacity, and ability to learn from experience.

Strategy:

Finding 2:
UNICEF has neither laid down an explicit regional strategy nor has it encouraged Country Offices to develop long-term country-specific strategies on decentralization.

UNICEF EAPRO has not articulated an explicit framework or strategy for responding to the decentralization efforts of different countries in the region. Similarly, with a few exceptions, Country Offices have also not developed explicit strategies for responding to or strengthening decentralization processes underway. Most respondents indicate that there is “no clear strategy on decentralized operations; it is very ad hoc.” Developing an overall organizational strategy for responding to decentralization or even a regional strategy is not easy. As a KI noted: “Our Headquarters (HQ) are responsible for developing strategies. However, there is a huge disconnect between the HQ policy developers and the Country Offices – the implementers. The policy developers are not on top of the policy contexts in the different countries.”

A similar disconnect, though to a lesser extent, could exist between the Regional Office and countries. However, despite the absence of an explicit strategy, most of the respondents rate UNICEF strategies and responses as being ‘appropriate’ or at least ‘somewhat appropriate.’ Given the absence of strategies, how does one interpret this rating?

One, the absence of an understood or explicit strategy does not appear to be deliberate and intentional. In some cases, limited discussion on strategic responses appears to be a handicap. As one respondent noted: “We are working on decentralization, but do not have a specific strategy as yet in place.” Two Section Chiefs specifically pointed out that even within their sectors, they did not have a specific strategy on decentralization.

Two, working with implicit strategies or emergent strategies could be an advantage. As some of the respondents pointed out:

- “There can be no blueprints. Only by doing and experimenting can we move along.”
- “It gives the space to Country Offices to respond to their contexts.
- “It allows for nimbleness and avoids overly bureaucratizing work”

Three, while there isn't always an implicit or intended strategy, there is clearly emergent strategy in all offices. An overall belief or expectation that decentralization will improve outcomes for children has dominated thinking in many of the Country Offices. However, there has been insufficient discussion on (i) whether particular offices will directly work on decentralization or not; and (ii) whether support for decentralization should not be a priority in some contexts. In practice, these decisions seem to be happening on the ground by default, and without being part of the intended strategy.

Four, UNICEF's messaging on decentralization is confusing. Given that the international research community itself has mixed views on the merits of decentralization, UNICEF has not been able to clarify when it is committed to focus on and work towards decentralization per se, or rather on improving the rights of children and women in a range of contexts using context appropriate strategies – and how these two approaches can be most complementary. Some respondents were of the view that decentralization is always positive. For example, one KI remarked, "One thing that we all know is that decentralization for countries, in general, helps advance child rights." On the other hand, others interviewed felt that decentralization was something UNICEF ought to understand and work with, but clearly saw that it could have both positive and negative repercussions on children and women.

Five, there appears to be a lack of distinction within UNICEF staff on whether they are working *on* decentralization directly, or whether they are simply working *in* contexts that are decentralizing or at the sub-national level. These are two different and somewhat inter-related though not mutually exclusive things. Such lack of clarity creates fuzziness around intended outcomes. For some offices, any work at the sub-national level was presented as an effort at working on decentralization. Other Country Offices described any effort to translate experiences from local contexts to national policy levels as 'working on decentralization.' Staff in only some offices was able to articulate different dimensions of strategic choices in their decentralization related work. They articulated goals around decentralization and areas of focus relating to different types of decentralization through a governance lens that included fiscal and administrative support. For example, one Zonal Office survey respondent noted tensions in a deconcentration focused approach: "Not all government ministries or provincial departments buy into decentralization; they may perhaps do so in principle but not in reality. UNICEF injects its resources through these line ministries (deconcentration). There is no merging point in sight between line ministries..." Over the long run, all offices are striving to improve outcomes for children and women. However, most Country Offices have not been able to understand, whether in the medium term, they are trying to improve outcomes for children by strengthening decentralization capacities and processes at the national or sub-national level or through the more traditional UNICEF sectoral approaches.

Capacity:

Finding 3:
The capacity to implement or manage programmes, more than knowledge, is perceived as a constraint in responding to decentralization within UNICEF that has adversely affected effectiveness.

The effectiveness of UNICEF’s responses to decentralization in terms of the impact on children will depend both on the capacity of governments (national and local) as well as on the capacity of UNICEF’s staff in the Country Offices. The evaluation has focused on capacity issues relating to UNICEF.

The survey looked at UNICEF staff capacities at different levels and from different perspectives. Knowledge is not perceived as a primary capacity challenge facing UNICEF. UNICEF staff at all levels believes that the capacity to implement or manage programmes is the more significant constraint.

- Nine out of 11 Section Chiefs assessed the Country Office knowledge of decentralization processes as ‘good’ or ‘very good.’ On the other hand, six of them assessed the Country Office capacity to respond as ‘good’, and 5 assessed it as ‘fair.’
- Zonal Office respondents assessed their own knowledge higher than their own capacity to manage and respond through programming. Zonal office staff attributed this to financial and human resource constraints.
- Deputy Representatives or Focal points assessed staff knowledge (in both Country Offices and Zonal Offices) as being higher than their capacity to respond or manage programmes (with average scores for the latter being between fair and good).

While respondents are aware of the many external factors beyond the control of UNICEF limiting their capacity to implement or manage programmes, the reasons for the gap between knowledge and ability to implement reside in internal factors. One respondent provided additional information on the ranking, noting, “The Zone Office has knowledge and human capacity related to decentralization programming, but it does not have a budget that it can allocate based on location specific context or issues.” Another flagged that “The Zonal Office has a very limited human resource capacity – one professional officer and a driver.” Similar views were expressed by many Key Informants as well. One respondent noted that capacity involves consistency, which itself relates to budget: “We recruit a child protection officer and she has been able to take things forward. And now we have to cut the post.”

Finding 4:
Staff considers support and capacity of more centralized levels within UNICEF as being weaker than what is available at their level.

The tendency to view the capacity of those in more centralized positions as weaker than theirs was most strongly expressed by zonal staff. Several factors could account for these ratings. They could be the result of structural factors that limit or weaken the ability of staff at more centralized levels to be seen as providing support to those at more decentralized levels. This could be expected given that the primary thrust of UNICEF’s work has traditionally been on delivering outcomes for children in the field. It could also be due to nature of incentives within UNICEF in terms of relationships. Does staff manage up or do officers manage down? There could be confusion about the roles and authority of Zonal Office staff. This finding has some relationship to issues discussed later around UNICEF’s centralized nature and in the tensions

explored between the different levels of UNICEF and how they play out in the response to decentralization (and to this evaluation).

Finding 5:

A majority of Zonal Office and Country Office staff rates the technical and strategic support on decentralization provided by the Regional Office as ‘poor’ or ‘very poor.’

Regional office staff received fairly low ratings on technical and strategic support on decentralization from Section Chiefs, Deputy Representatives and focal points. For instance, none of them rated technical support from the regional office on decentralization as being ‘very good’ and only three gave a rating of ‘good.’ Five rated technical support from the Regional office as ‘fair’ and 6 rated it as being ‘poor’ or ‘very poor.’ As strategic and technical support is part of the mandate of the regional office – the fact that 12 out of 15 respondents who scored regional office technical support on decentralization assessed it as fair, poor, or very poor stands out. Four respondents indicated this question was not applicable – raising the question of whether they did not receive any inputs (and perhaps should have) or whether such inputs were not needed or warranted in those cases. For example, in explaining their scores, one respondent noted, “We never asked regional support for decentralized programming and were not aware that this kind of support might be available.” Regional office strategy support on decentralization received similarly low scores. This could be due in part to the lack of awareness on the role of the Regional Office – that the RO is expected to respond to requests and also pro-actively offer guidance even when requests are not there, in addition to its oversight and wider knowledge-cum-learning and partnership roles.

Finding 6:

Four inherent tensions in UNICEF’s internal programming and ways of working affect the organization’s capacity to respond to decentralization, and have limited its organizational effectiveness.

Four inherent tensions affect the effectiveness of UNICEF’s responses (See Figure 1). These are:

Tension A – between the need for deep local knowledge in decision making and the belief that strategy formulation capabilities reside in those with global knowledge;

Tension B – between the need for long term understanding and leadership continuity and frequent transfer of decision makers every few years;

Tension C - between the need for interdisciplinary knowledge about governance, administration and the political economy and UNICEF’s traditional ways of focusing on sectoral domains and working in silos; and

Tension D – between the need for locally contextualized strategies when decision making tends to be centralized.

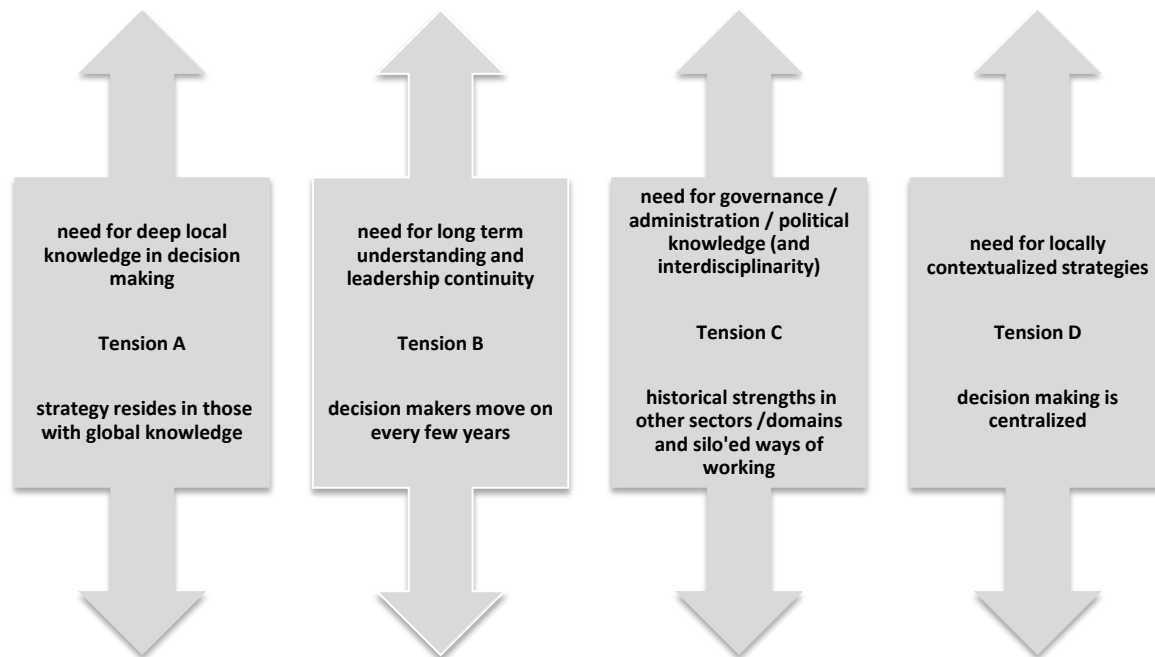


Figure 1: Tensions in UNICEF Capacities related to Responding to Decentralization

Tensions A and B: These tensions arise because working on decentralization requires staff to have in-depth country knowledge of the national and sub-national contexts, whereas most of the decision making and strategy positions are held by short-tenure international staff who take time to learn these contexts. One Section Chief surveyed noted: “Most of the Section Chiefs are international professionals who need to exert double efforts to learn about local planning and budgeting processes and decentralization in general.” One KI noted: “The biggest constraining factor is UNICEF’s ability to manage its human resources both in terms of national or international policy staff.” The KI went on to state: “UNICEF has no coherent policy of leadership management or transition. There is no synchronization between leadership hiring and program cycles during a management transition. National interests shouldn’t be so subject to our management transition.” Other respondents flagged the frequent changes in UNICEF leadership and consequent lack of continuity of strategies.

The stated value of having staff on the ground seemed to co-exist somewhat uncomfortably with concerns over staff over-stepping its mandate. As a Key informant pointed out: “In one district, the local government has given us space...they are involving our staff in things that are going on. The person who is responsible for that Office is working under my supervision. He is to monitor activities, but not to act as a technical specialist in different domains. However, the person has a tendency to try to respond to technical questions when he should be acting as an interface to the experts in the capital. There is a risk if this person will try to respond on all matters.”

Tension C was flagged by several respondents directly and indirectly. One respondent noted that historically, “in focus area 5, when we look at the type of program areas we consider under social policy, the decentralization one was actually the weakest. We had limited capacity to address this.” One KI noted, “we don’t have a comparative advantage on governance...we start

dealing with people at the local level than governance becomes a critical issue. Most of the time you don't have strict financial processes at the local level for good, well managed, and transparent use of funds...another gap is community development specialists...in general we are not highly skilled to work with local people." Another KI noted: "In UNICEF we have become process heavy and are inward looking. While we are talking about change we have no human resource strategy to address that change. The constraint is the ability of our staff to engage in public sector dialogue. We are sector driven experts, but we are in a middle income country that is looking at moving policies into action. Our people are much more confident in technical issues rather than governance issues. We have that as a gap." Another respondent noted, "UNICEF lacks the necessary expertise and therefore is not invited for discussions around decentralization. Decentralization is seen as a governance program and UNICEF is not seen as a partner in good governance."

Some argue that working intersectorally is a challenge for UNICEF staff who are more comfortable working sectorally, while others argue that "interventions across sectors that are done together have intersectionality gains" which also help to address the "shortage of human labour" within UNICEF.

In some of the offices where decentralization is a more explicit strategy of work staff also indicated efforts to build staff capacity, for example, "We have tried to raise our capacity at the subnational level. We've had training related to decentralization (on social budgeting etc.)." Another KI noted, "this is quite a new area for UNICEF to work in...Cambodia has been quite innovative in grasping the opportunity to be present in national discussions and also to be present at the local level to see issues in decentralization in administration and in service delivery. It is a new area where we are still learning but we have been quite effective in the way we have built on the historical assets of UNICEF to bring [the organization] into this opportunity that is relevant politically and in the current development context."

Most staff who discussed capacity around working on decentralization explicitly was clear that this was not a historical or current strength of the organization. Even those offices who have been focusing more on working on decentralization and have had targeted capacity building on dimensions of decentralization were consistent on this finding. For example, even the positive examples of UNICEF capacity building provided were done with a clear recognition that such efforts only increased UNICEF's ability to sit around the table – they did not make UNICEF the lead or comparative lead in such areas. For example, one KI noted: "UNICEF has really progressed a lot in terms of having internal capacity to influence budgets, to have a dialogue about fiscal space and criteria on social investment and expenditure related conversations. In these areas the World Bank, ADB, the IMF, have greater knowledge and capacity for technical inputs but UNICEF has really progressed...in Cambodia, we are sitting along with the ADB and QWB discussing criteria for budget allocations and strategies in relation to fiscal expansion...discussing where social protection priorities should be. When we are talking about advocacy in fiscal reforms we might have comparatively less capacity than the others but our capacity strengthening has been quite an achievement in terms of sitting around the table. Relatively speaking though, UNICEF has a disadvantage there."

Another KI noted, “for the first time in UNICEF we have hired experts that are not really sectoral...however there is still the issue of people sticking to their sectors. WE are trying to address the sectoral silos but people fall back...country program accountability helps with the convergence of knowledge across sectors. What is hindering this is the skill set of our specialists. To a certain extent they find it threatening to have to contend with a different sort of knowledge base (such as governance or public sector).”

Some respondents spoke more generally about the need for a new kind of staff required and new structures or systems for how staff works together in order to work effectively on decentralization. One KI noted, “many of our staff members are very used to emergency response and service delivery kinds of activities. But the country is moving quickly, we need to change our focus. There is a capacity gap in the office in national and international capacity [related to decentralization processes the country is moving towards] so internal capacity building is very much needed as we move ahead.” One respondent noted, “skill matching” was a problem, noting: “UNICEF keeps saying that it wants to work more at the policy level where it sees it has an advantage, but our hiring policies and HR doesn’t allow us to move forward to make those changes. The internal politics are hugely constraining.” Another KI noted: “Staff need to be able to work and network and monitor work at the local level, but also be able to dialogue, negotiate, and influence policies at the national level. It’s not very easy. You often find you have staff that is either very grassroots-oriented, people who are high flyers, or the advocacy types. We need to relook at competencies for staff in a middle income context. The profile is very different from a more ‘traditional’ UNICEF office.” More generally the respondent noted, “We need to think much more cross sectorally. We need to bring more interdisciplinary approaches and strategies for implementation. For example, if you are a health and nutrition specialist you need to be informed by a larger set of skills/specializations, but also be open to drawing on the best of other disciplines. The way our structures are developed, though our philosophy and vision are for the ‘whole child’, the way offices are set up and managed we have actually compartmentalized children.”

Tension D: Several respondents indicated that Zonal Offices are inadequately involved in strategy and planning and argue that strategy resides largely in the Country offices, whereas the knowledge of the local context resides at the zonal office. In some cases there is a view that capacity and knowledge should reside at the local level but it does not – hence the need to continue to centralize decision making and authority.

Indeed, UNICEF is fairly centralized in its own efforts to respond to decentralization – an irony not missed by staff. One zonal respondent noted, simply, that the “UNICEF bureaucracy does not match with decentralization.” Another Zonal office survey respondent, for example, noted: “UNICEF itself still applies centralized planning process to produce the Annual Work Plan (AWP). The Program Section at the country office provide less opportunity for zonal staff to participate in the planning session. Zone offices are not supported or encouraged to perform roles and responsibilities as stated in the country program document. In practice, only zonal program officers are required to provide input for AWP development process in respective programs and support AWP implementation at their assigned zone. It seems that the section programs still apply old working approaches.

Another zonal respondent noted, “the strategy and or programming are not expected or supposed to be done at the zone level. The country office prescribes this.” This concern was raised by a number of zonal office staff respondents who flagged, “program planning and implementation are centrally managed by program section at the country office level so it’s a challenge for the zone office to be agile and respond to opportunity and challenges presented by decentralization;” and, “strategy and interventions plans are generated with limited participation from zonal offices.” This was also noted by some managers at the country office level, for example, one KI noted: “If you take our policy and program manual nowhere are we encouraged or asked to sign a workplan at the local level. What we sign is with national authorities. I think that this is something that has some limitations. If, for example, it clearly encouraged country offices to (where possible) sign a local workplan with the local authorities that would be great. When I [tried to encourage] my colleagues or my whole team to write a framework or sign an agreement with the local authorities they argued that this is not necessary and ask, ‘why add more work’If you want people to have ownership you have to sign with them – not just signing for some activities that will be implemented by you with your money. No, you are getting into a partnership where you both have responsibilities.”

Finding 7:
Four factors in particular, internal to UNICEF, appear to account for these tensions that limit effectiveness of UNICEF’s response.

The main causes of the four tensions can be traced to UNICEF’s internal decision making structures and processes.

- 1) UNICEF does not have a comparative advantage on governance issues: In most countries, UNICEF has not established its reputation as an agency with expertise to work on issues of accountability and governance. Decentralization is typically seen as a governance issue, and as a result UNICEF is usually not invited by government or other partners for discussions around decentralization. This was felt even by Country Offices that have been focusing more on working on decentralization and have had targeted capacity building on dimensions of decentralization. However, although decentralization is not a historical or current strength of UNICEF, as its experience and capacity increase in this area, there should be more opportunities for engagement in the context of UNDAF-centred coordination around decentralization.
- 2) Staff competencies are not appropriate and adequate for working effectively on decentralization and in decentralized settings. Staff repeatedly pointed to the following deficiencies in the way UNICEF functions. For example, they note:
 - UNICEF has sector driven experts, but not necessarily people who can influence policy and thinking. Our people are much more confident in technical issues rather than governance issues. In a middle income country, we need people who can move policies into action.
 - We need to relook at competencies for staff in a middle income context. Many staff members are very used to emergency response and service delivery kinds of activities.

- Skill-matching is a problem. Staff need to be able to work, network and monitor work at the local level. And also be able to dialogue, negotiate, and influence policies at the national level.
 - We need staff that can think much more cross-sectorally. We need to bring more interdisciplinary approaches and strategies for implementation.
- 3) There are shortcomings in UNICEF’s ability to manage its human resources both in terms of national and international policy staff, in relation to the requirements for effective work on decentralization. Respondents pointed out that:
- international staff come and go. As soon as the team is formed you have people leaving and you are trying to get into a new equilibrium.
 - most of the section chiefs are international professionals and need to exert double efforts to learn about local planning and budgeting processes and decentralization in general.
 - Even national staff does not have the ability to influence or engage in public dialogue.
 - UNICEF has no coherent policy of leadership management or transition.
 - There is little synchronization between leadership hiring and program cycles during a management transition. National interest shouldn’t be so subject to our management transition.
- 4) UNICEF has become process-heavy and very inward-looking. Staff pointed out that UNICEF is fairly centralized in its own efforts to respond to decentralization. Respondents flag that:
- Zonal offices are inadequately involved in strategy and planning
 - Strategy formulation expertise resides largely in the Country Offices, whereas the knowledge of the local context resides at the zonal office.
 - Ideally, capacity and knowledge should reside at the local level but it does not – hence the need to continue to centralize decision making and authority.

Zonal Offices in particular pointed out that programme planning and implementation are centrally managed by Program Sections at the Country Office level. So it is a challenge for the Zone Offices to be agile and respond to opportunity and challenges presented by decentralization.

Ability to learn from experience

Finding 8:
Two approaches within UNICEF’s overall programme strategies that are most uniformly regarded as ‘successful’ or ‘appropriate’ in addressing decentralization are (i) strengthening the generation and use of data; and (ii) influencing policies through pilots. Capacity building efforts came out less clearly as being effective.

As elaborated in Section 2, UNICEF’s approaches and responses to decentralization fall under three broad categories:

- Influencing policies through pilots;
- Strengthening the generation and use of data as evidence, and;
- Capacity building of stakeholders.

Among respondents, (i) strengthening the generation and use of data as evidence; and (ii) influencing policies through pilots were considered by a majority to be ‘successful’ or ‘appropriate.’ That capacity building efforts came out less clearly as being effective may simply reflect the many difficulties of and the long term nature of capacity strengthening. As brought out in previous evaluations of UNICEF’s capacity building work, it is also perhaps easier to identify UNICEF’s role in modifying a particular policy or shifting the policy discourse than establishing that capacity was strengthened after an intervention. While most respondents did highlight the importance of zonal offices in theory and often in practice, this was also one of the areas that was perhaps most imbued with tensions in views (often within as well as across individuals).

It is not the intention here to elaborate on examples. It could be expected that developing and planning interventions on the ground in sub-national contexts and injecting additional resources into those contexts have led to improvements in the lives of children. However, many of these interventions did not speak directly to responding to decentralization, but rather were examples of good and poor practices in working at the local level.

Finding 9:
Deficiencies in the results framework developed and used by UNICEF have been a factor affecting the quality of planning, monitoring and implementation of responses to decentralization as well as the ability to evaluate effectiveness.

Almost all Country Offices have responded to processes of decentralization underway in the respective countries. However, many of the decentralization initiatives supported by UNICEF do not have well-defined statements of results that are backed by appropriate indicators and markers of progress. Outcome statements frequently tend to be very general, unclear, not entirely relevant and not easy to measure at decentralized levels. Often, baseline data are not readily available to assess progress against targets for output and outcome indicators. These deficiencies are often compounded by a weak in-country national system of data collection and general system over-load.

3.3 Sustainability

Finding 10:
Inadequate attention paid to design, resourcing and implementation components of decentralization responses have tended to adversely affected sustainability.

The principal question that the evaluation seeks to address is the extent to which UNICEF’s support has helped create an enabling environment to achieve equitable results for children in decentralizing environments. The question of sustainability, however, has been difficult to assess given that in several instances, the responses are relatively new and unfolding. Noting that the term ‘sustainability’ has many connotations, key informants were asked: to what extent and at what levels has UNICEF’s support contributed to an enabling environment to achieve

equitable results for children in decentralized environments? Discussions with UNICEF staff revealed that responses in support of decentralization have been more likely to be sustained when Country Offices have (i) worked simultaneously with both national and local governments; (ii) supported the national governments to develop legislative frameworks that ensure entitlements for children; (iii) nurtured effective partnerships with the Government, community-based organizations (CBOs) and communities; (iv) developed local level data and evidence gathering systems; (v) introduced innovative and appropriate methodologies and approaches that can track progress and be replicated. On the other hand, a number of factors have also adversely affected sustainability. These include (i) the absence of a well-articulated long-term strategy and approach; (ii) insufficient risk analysis (political, administrative, social, corruption, etc.); (iii) poor advocacy to promote broad-based ownership among different stakeholders apart from local and national governments; (iv) inability to link efforts in sectors to a broader national programme of decentralization; and (v) unrealistic timelines for pilots to be scaled-up nationwide. Sustainability has also been adversely affected when resource implications – especially financial and human - have not been fully factored in, and capacity-building strategies within government and among non-state actors have not been carefully thought through.

3.4 Partnerships

Finding 11:
UNICEF has built good working relations with a number of national governments on issues of decentralization; however, it has been less successful in establishing strong linkages in this area with other UN agencies, sectoral line ministries and sub-national levels of government.

Given the broad range of interventions needed to advance child rights, UNICEF does not usually work exclusively, but often in partnership with governments and other organizations (such as Save the Children), academic groups (such as Institute for Development Studies, Sussex) and other UN agencies at the global, regional and country levels (including participating in thematic working groups).

UNICEF's partnerships to strengthen the impact of its responses to decentralization in the region, were rated, on average, as being more effective with governments than other UN agencies and NGOs. UNICEF may not have a direct comparative advantage in many aspects of decentralization; but in a few cases, it has been able to bring relevant partners together to ensure mutual buy-in and leadership.

UNICEF's links with federal Governments have been particularly strong, based on a long history of cooperation in many countries. However, UNICEF has not always made the most of its proximity with the Government to systematically and comprehensively push the agenda of decentralization within sectors, particularly with line ministries and the ones dealing with local governance. With a few exceptions, UNICEF has also not capitalized on the potential linkages it could have built with other United Nations agencies in support of its responses to decentralization. Although Country Offices have experimented with a variety of different modalities to improve effectiveness of operations at the sub-national and local levels, UNICEF has not been consistently successful in designing appropriate long-term modalities for working

with provincial, district and local governments. While it is true that approaches will vary depending upon the context of decentralization, most Country Offices have not carried out a systematic country analysis that systematically examines the opportunities, challenges and risks associated with decentralization – given UNICEF’s resource constraints.

Table 2: Ratings on effectiveness of partnership on decentralizations			
	Less effective partnerships		More effective partnerships
Zonal	UN agencies (2.44)	NGOs (1.88)	Local government (1.44)
Section Chiefs	UN agencies (2.8)	NGOs (2.4)	Government (2.1)
Deputy Representative/ focal points	NGOs [2.63]	UN agencies [2.5]	Government (2.13)

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

UNICEF Country Offices have been responding in different ways and at different speeds to the different approaches towards decentralization being adopted by the countries in the region. In all cases, UNICEF’s responses have been characteristically opportunistic, as well as well-aligned with national priorities. Available reports and studies, by and large, suggest positive impacts on the lives of children. The findings of this evaluation, discussed in the previous Section, however, indicate that such impacts could be further enhanced by addressing critical issues relating to strategy, capacity, and ability to learn from experience. Gains can be further enhanced by more directly addressing concerns of sustainability and by strengthening partnerships with stakeholders.

This Section offers a set of recommendations that follow from the findings and conclusions of the evaluation.

Strategic recommendations:

- 1. Develop a framework:** UNICEF should spell out a regional framework or strategy that recognizes the distinction and interplay between focusing programmatic work *ON* decentralization and programming *IN* decentralized or decentralizing contexts, and enables Country offices to make informed choices. In some countries, UNICEF has a strategy (implicit) on working *ON* decentralization - by working explicitly and directly towards goals around improving decentralization capacity and strengthening implementation. In other countries, UNICEF is simply programming *IN* decentralized or decentralizing contexts, and not directly focused on strengthening or improving decentralization processes. This is a distinction with a difference but one which does not seem to be well understood or articulated within UNICEF. A regional framework on decentralization should include strategies to inform such choices.
- 2. Apply an equity focus:** In countries that are decentralizing, the choice is between working *on* decentralization or working *in* decentralized contexts. An equity lens should

be used to inform explicit decision making on (i) when to work directly *on* decentralization or to work *in* decentralizing contexts, and (ii) whether one or the other (or often a mix of both) is more strategic in achieving improvements for children and women and particularly the most marginalized. Developing a typology of offices working in a mix of contexts, and working on or in decentralization could help UNICEF articulate what success looks like in the different contexts. This is also likely to promote learning within and across the different clusters more usefully.

- 3. Leverage opportunities strategically:** It is necessary to question the strategic need to work on decentralization in all contexts. It is not decentralization per se that UNICEF should be focused on or working towards, but rather improving the rights of children and women in a range of contexts using context appropriate strategies. In the region, UNICEF is working in countries that are at different stages of decentralization including some that remain highly centralized. Encouraging all countries to focus on a response to decentralization may not be the best use of UNICEF resources. UNICEF leadership management should explicitly identify the countries where work on decentralization is seen as being a critical lever.
- 4. Fine-tune country programmes:** It is important for Country Offices to fine-tune the country programmes to enhance their strategic and operational effectiveness keeping in mind the context of decentralization and an agreed upon framework. This will, among other things, require the following:
 - a) Paying more attention to setting clear outcomes and targets: Ad hoc approaches were flagged as limiting the ability to learn from what is working or not working.
 - b) Recalibrating staffing and staff capacities: Governance and budgeting, for example, are not perceived to be areas where UNICEF has strengths.
 - c) Addressing shortcomings in hiring, transitions, and leadership: There appears to be a disconnect between the requirements of working on decentralization and human resource policies and practices.
 - d) Relying on evidence: There is little in the way of evidence on what approaches work and in what contexts to inform responses to decentralization. More applied research on the chosen strategies of working in decentralization contexts is needed. Indeed those strategies could be framed as hypotheses and tested.
 - e) Addressing risks: More attention needs to be paid to the various risks, including risks of reform (centre-periphery conflict), fiduciary risks, and risks to quality of services. The evaluation pointed to instances when a ‘false reality’ surrounded decentralization - one that assumes that decentralization is positive, and at times, more advanced than it actually is on the ground
 - f) Revisiting organizational responses: A more explicit strategy is needed, for instance, when setting up and identifying the functions and formal roles of zonal offices.
- 5. Focus in middle income countries:** Several threads emerged through this evaluation on the needs of responding to decentralization, and more generally working, in middle income countries. UNICEF should be more explicit and forward-looking in the nature of the evolving types of support that Middle Income countries require and lay out a clear strategy in the context of decentralization for meeting these needs. Such change is more likely to be revolutionary than evolutionary, and in order to adequately respond to the

changes, the organization needs to develop a strategy and prioritize a change management process.

Knowledge-Oriented recommendations:

- 6. Enhance staff knowledge:** Working on decentralization and working in decentralized or decentralizing contexts require multiple domain skills and inter-disciplinary knowledge – spanning an ability to scope the social-political-cultural environment, understand the nuances of social policy, planning, public administration, monitoring and evaluation. UNICEF doesn't have, and need not have, extensive in-house expertise in each of these areas. UNICEF staff should be better equipped to speak to the issues of decentralization, understand implications, advocate effectively using evidence, make strategic interventions where useful, capture funding opportunities where these can contribute to improving the lives of children. Being effective requires more than technical knowledge and sectoral expertise. It requires the ability to more broadly engage in public dialogue and contribute to public reasoning on a wide range of social and economic policies that affect children.
- 7. Undertake a detailed policy study on piloting:** The evaluation suggests a relative lack of sophistication in the analysis of how pilots and ground level experiences actually lead to policy change. Many respondents described a fairly linear process of evidence being shared and leading to policy change. Very few identified examples where this process did not work as planned. Despite the fairly unproblematized view of informing national policies through subnational pilots among respondents, research beyond UNICEF on using research to influence policy making has identified a range of factors that seem to matter in different contexts. The relative lack of language among UNICEF staff to discuss or describe the policy making avenues in the contexts they work, the decision makers they are trying to influence, the levers they seem as open to them, suggest not that this knowledge is not latent within UNICEF, but that UNICEF could benefit by examining in more detail (and with rigour) the pilot-to-policy model in order to draw out a more nuanced understanding of these processes. There is a concern that staff may be picking positive outliers as evidence that the pilot-to-policy influence model is an effective and appropriate approach in UNICEF's response to decentralization. Clearly, one ought not to embrace a model that simply takes positive examples of influence but one which also looks at examples where there were intentions of policy influence that did not come about. Such an effort would go beyond decentralization as the pilot-to-policy model seems a core model at play in UNICEF generally. It is therefore recommended that UNICEF should consider doing a detailed policy study to draw on examples of policy influence (or lack of it) from successful and unsuccessful models in order to develop theories of change and a framework of elements that matter for influencing policy and to build deeper understanding and language around policy influence within UNICEF.

Process Oriented recommendations:

- 8. Involve the staff:** Some key informants were skeptical that the findings would be used. It is therefore important for UNICEF to revert back to staff with the Final Report, and outline a process for engaging with and spelling out the concrete steps that are needed to address conclusions and findings of this evaluation.

- 9. Engage with findings:** Given the nature of the findings, there can be many paths forward to address the issues and challenges flagged in this Report. UNICEF management should lay out a process for engaging with and acting on the findings of this evaluation. The findings of this evaluation take UNICEF into making strategy choices and priorities – something squarely in the realm of UNICEF leadership.

Clarifying responsibilities:

- 10. Roles and responsibilities:** The lack of clarity on roles and support function from Regional office staff by Zonal office and Country Office staff should be addressed. Regional office staff received fairly low ratings on technical and strategic support for decentralization (on a five-point rating scale). While it would help to compare this with ratings in other regions (to see if this is a generic or region-specific concern), greater clarity on the roles that the regional office could play with respect to decentralization would help, and this should be clearly communicated.

Annex 1
Relevant Excerpts from the Terms of Reference

UNICEF/EAPRO, Bangkok

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR CONSULTANTS AND CONTRACTORS

Requesting Section: Evaluation Unit, UNICEF EAPRO, Bangkok

1. Nature of Consultancy:

Mandate for conducting a thematic evaluation on decentralization in East Asia and the Pacific

According to UNICEF's Evaluation Policy the responsibility for undertaking regional thematic evaluations lies with the Regional Directors who "commission multi-country thematic evaluations, in accordance with their regional evaluation plans and in consultation with the Regional Management Team." Regarding the purpose of the regional evaluations, the Policy states that they "serve the Regional Management Team and partners in the assessment of regional strategies to help countries to address trans-boundary and shared regional issues and to mutually assist each other in achieving national goals and priorities".

Undertaking a regional thematic evaluation in the East Asia and Pacific region is grounded in the Regional Office Management Plan (ROMP) 2010-2011 for the Regional Offices for East Asia and the Pacific (EAPRO) and South Asia (ROSA). An agreement was reached during the joint EAPRO/ROSA RMT meeting in Beijing (1-4/7 November 2010) to "implement two [...] thematic evaluations in 2011 on capacity development and decentralization, within the context of disparity reduction and strategic partnerships." While the regional thematic evaluation on capacity development was conducted in 2011, an evaluation on decentralization did not take place due to reasons beyond the control of the Evaluation Unit. However, at EAPRO's Mid-Year Review (23 July 2012), Senior Management reiterated its commitment to undertake a regional thematic evaluation on decentralization during 2012.

Most countries within the East Asia and Pacific region, and particularly in more recent years, have pursued decentralization reforms. Sectors of special relevance to children, including education, health and water, have been particularly affected by decentralization.

The basic decentralization premise suggests that local governments, endowed with adequate resources, can provide the level and types of public services such as education, health and water that most closely reflect local demands. Decentralizing service delivery is undeniably a complex process which works differently in each sector and in each context. Decentralization involves inter-alia, re-assignment of responsibilities; shifting of decision making; allocation of financial resources; local planning and budgeting; improving local sectorial capacity and greater community involvement. If done well, decentralization has the potential to improve equity, efficiency, accessibility, and accountability in public service provision, reaching the most disadvantaged at local level. Conversely, poorly implemented decentralization can result in shifting of responsibilities without resources, failures of service delivery, and accentuated regional inequalities. Although advancing child welfare is typically not the primary motivation behind decentralization, any improvements in public services point to the potential for meaningful and equitable results for children.

It has been recognized that the institutional changes driven by decentralization have important implications for UNICEF's effort to influence policy processes. In particular, since the adoption of the Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) 2006-2013 including Focus Area 5, of which decentralization is a key thematic interest, UNICEF has focused on strengthening the capacities of States and societies in the

design and implementation of social and economic policies, legislative measures and budgetary allocations that enable them to meet their obligations' under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). In addition, UNICEF's recent re-focus on equity has drawn renewed attention to the need to guarantee "all rights for all children everywhere" by prioritizing the most deprived and to demonstrate results in this respect.

A thematic evaluation on the topic "Decentralization" is perfectly in line with UNICEF's strategic plan and it should take into account and build upon previous studies on decentralization undertaken by UNICEF in the East Asia and Pacific region.

2. Purpose of Assignment (Provide brief background and purpose of assignment):

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess UNICEF's strategies and interventions geared towards the realization of the rights of children and women in decentralized environments in the East Asia and Pacific region, and to identify strategic issues and options for UNICEF's future interventions. The evaluation will particularly focus on the extent to which UNICEF's strategies in support to/in responding to decentralization are appropriate for contributing to more equitable results for children in decentralized environments.

The specific objectives of this evaluation are:

1. To assess the extent to which UNICEF's strategies, implicit or explicit, aimed at achieving results for children in decentralized environments are relevant and effective.
2. To distill good practices and lessons learned from UNICEF's engagement in decentralized environments, especially in the areas of capacity development, policy advocacy, and partnerships.
3. To formulate recommendations on strategic issues and options with a view to improving UNICEF's strategies and interventions geared towards the realization of "all rights for all children" in decentralized environments.

The Regional Management Team of East Asia and the Pacific as well as the Senior Management of UNICEF EAPRO constitute the primary audience and main users of this evaluation. Country office programme staff, regional advisers in EAPRO and staff within the wider organization as well as stakeholders are also expected to be users of this evaluation.

The evaluation will cover the period from 2006 to mid-2012, corresponding to the implementation of UNICEF's current Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) 2006-2013. In terms of geographical scope, the evaluation will cover all countries that have a UNICEF presence in the East Asia and Pacific region with special attention to those that have undergone a decentralization process.

Below are some of the main evaluation questions clustered according to the evaluation criteria that will be used. This is not an exhaustive list as the evaluation questions will be further expanded and refined by the evaluator following preliminary interviews with EAPRO Senior Management, the evaluation management and an initial desk review. The full list of evaluation questions is expected to be included in the Inception Report to be prepared by the evaluator. To the extent possible, Human Rights and Gender Equality issues should be addressed in the evaluation.

Relevance:

- To what extent are UNICEF's strategies and interventions appropriate for addressing the opportunities and challenges presented by decentralization?
- To what extent are UNICEF's initiatives in decentralized environments in line with the organization's strategic directions in particular with its recent equity re-focus?

- To what extent UNICEF's interventions in decentralized environments are in line with key country priorities, international agreements and conventions (MDGs, Aid Effectiveness, CRC, CEDAW, etc.)?

Effectiveness:

- To what extent are UNICEF's strategies and interventions in decentralized environments (upstream/downstream, at central/local level etc.) contributing to the achievement of equitable results for children?
- To what extent UNICEF's presence at the subnational level (field offices) has contributed to the organization's effectiveness in decentralized environments?
- How are planned strategies and interventions adequate to support capacity deficiencies?
 - o At national level to effectively address children issues through decentralization;
 - o At local level to absorb responsibilities implied by decentralization.

Sustainability:

- To what extent and at what levels has UNICEF's support helped creating an enabling environment to achieve equitable results for children in decentralized environments?

Cross-cutting issues:

- To what extent has UNICEF's partnership approach been effective to better address and advocate for the rights of children and women at central and local level in the context of decentralization?

4. Programme Area and Specific Project Involved:

In line with UNICEF's Evaluation Policy, evaluations have to be independent and therefore conducted by impartial outsiders. The Regional Evaluation Advisor will manage the evaluation but cannot conduct it to ensure independence and compliance with the Evaluation Policy. This task has been included and budgeted in the Evaluation Unit's work plan

7. Methodology and Work Schedule:

The evaluation will use a combination of methods of data collection and analysis. It will include a desk review of relevant UNICEF documentation from Headquarters and the Regional Office outlining UNICEF's strategies and approaches to decentralization, as well as of existing studies conducted by UNICEF and other development agencies at country level with a view to determining the state-of-the-art of decentralization in the East Asia and Pacific region and UNICEF's engagement so far. An email survey will be administered to relevant staff from UNICEF EAPRO, and Country Offices in the region, focusing on the identification of existing trends and bottlenecks with regard to UNICEF's contribution to more equitable results for children in decentralized environments. This will be complemented by key informant interviews by phone or skype.

Good practices of different UNICEF offices in the region will be synthesized as part of the evaluation exercise.

The evaluation process will include the following key stages:

1. Orientation and desk review to further define the scope and focus of the evaluation, in particular the evaluation questions.
2. Interviews with Senior Management and other relevant EAPRO staff.
3. Inception report structured in line with the UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation TOR and Inception Reports. Among others, the report will include findings of the desk review, additional

questions (if needed) and sub-questions, a full methodological proposal and a roadmap. The Inception report should be submitted to the evaluation manager by the end of January 2013. The evaluation manager will convene a meeting with the evaluation reference group to discuss the report. Following the evaluation reference group meeting, a revised Inception report will be submitted to the evaluation manager for approval.

4. Data collection (including the development of relevant tools that will be fully described in the inception report) and analysis.
5. Draft evaluation report submitted to the evaluation manager by the end of February 2013; evaluation reference group convened for comments and discussion on the draft report.
6. Incorporation of comments and final evaluation report submitted to the evaluation manager for approval together with the standalone good practices document.

8. End Product(s): The final evaluation report including a standalone document on good practices is expected to be completed by mid-April 2013.

**Annex 2:
Refinement of Evaluation Questions and Associated Data Collection Methods and Sources**

From TOR	Refined / Unpacked – Questions	Data Collection Method	Source of Data
<p>Relevance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent are UNICEF’s strategies and interventions appropriate for addressing the opportunities and challenges presented by decentralization? - To what extent are UNICEF’s initiatives in decentralizing environments in line with the organization’s strategic directions in particular with its recent equity re-focus? - To what extent are UNICEF’s interventions in decentralizing environments in line with key country priorities, international agreements and conventions (MDGs, Aid Effectiveness, CRC, CEDAW, etc.)? 	<p>1. What are UNICEF strategies, implicit or explicit, aimed at achieving results for children in decentralizing environments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Are UNICEF country plans aligned with the national situation of decentralization? b. Do sectoral plans take account of decentralization issues? 	<p>Document review. KII with Country Representatives and regional office staff. Survey</p>	<p>CCA CPD CPAP MTRs Situation Analysis Evaluation Reports Strategy Notes (equity) Survey</p>
		<p>Document Review KII’s with Country Representatives</p>	
		<p>KII with Country Representatives</p>	<p>KII’s</p>
<p>Effectiveness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent are UNICEF’s strategies and interventions in decentralizing environments (upstream/downstream, at central/local level etc.) contributing to the achievement of equitable results for children? - To what extent UNICEF’s presence at the sub-national level (field offices) has contributed to the organization’s effectiveness in decentralized environments? - How are planned strategies and interventions adequate to support capacity deficiencies? o At national level to effectively address children issues through decentralization; o At local level to absorb responsibilities implied by decentralization. <p>Cross-cutting issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent has UNICEF’s 	<p>2. Are UNICEF’s strategies and interventions (including but not limited to field offices, piloting and scaling of pilots, policy efforts) appropriate for addressing the opportunities and challenges presented by decentralization?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Why / why not? b. What other strategies / activities should be undertaken? 	<p>Document Review KII with Country Representatives Survey of Programme Staff.</p>	<p>Specifically: Country Programmes Decentralization reports / reviews.</p>
	<p>3. What are good practices from UNICEF’s strategies in decentralizing environments?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Including (where appropriate) good practices in policy advocacy. b. Including (where appropriate) good practices in 	<p>Document Review KII’s with country Representatives. Survey</p>	<p>CPD Annual Reports Country Programmes, Decentralization reports</p>

<p>partnership approach been effective to better address and advocate for the rights of children and women at central and local level in the context of decentralization?</p>	<p>partnership development.</p> <p>c. Including practices that emphasize or promote equity, gender equity and human rights.</p>		
	<p>4. What are areas where UNICEF can learn from negative experiences in decentralized environments?</p> <p>a. Including (where appropriate) gaps related to policy advocacy.</p> <p>b. Including (where appropriate) gaps related to partnership development.</p> <p>c. Including (where appropriate) gaps related to addressing equity, gender equity and human rights.</p>	<p>Document Review KII's with country Representatives. Survey</p>	<p>Country Programmes, Annual Reports Decentralization reports.</p>
	<p>5. What are the perceived capacities and capacity gaps among UNICEF staff in implementing strategies or activities in decentralized environments?</p> <p>a. What is the knowledge level of UNICEF staff on key issues related to decentralization?</p> <p>b. What are the perceived gaps in capacity of UNICEF staff in engaging with decentralization?</p>	<p>KII's with Country Representatives. Survey (Perception based self-assessment).</p>	
	<p>6. What are the perceived capacities and capacity gaps in National governments with reference to implementing decentralization Programmes?</p>	<p>KII's with Country Representatives Survey</p>	

	a. What activities have been undertaken to increase the capacity of central and local governments with regards to different types of decentralization?		
<p>Sustainability: - To what extent and at what levels has UNICEF's support helped creating an enabling environment to achieve equitable results for children in decentralizing environments?</p>		Document review. KII with Country Representatives and regional office staff.	

Annex 3

List of Documents Reviewed

UNICEF Strategic Documents

- UNICEF medium-term Strategic Plan 2006-2009 and Annexes
- Report on the midterm review of the medium-term Strategic Plan 2006-2009
- Extension of medium-term Strategic Plan 2006-2009 until 2011 – Background Note
- Extension of extended medium-term Strategic Plan 2006-2009 until 2013
- Road Map towards the UNICEF medium-term Strategic Plan for 2014-2017 (draft outline expected in Feb 2013 – Executive Board)
- UNICEF Integrated Monitoring & Evaluation Framework 2012-2013
- East Asia and Pacific ROMP 2006-2009
- ROSA and EAPRO Office Management Plans and Integrated Budgets 2010-2011
- EAPRO Office Management Plans and Integrated Budgets 2012-2013

UNICEF Reports & Studies

- Decentralization: Equity and Sectoral Policy implications for UNICEF in East Asia and the Pacific, Social Policy and Economic Analysis, UNICEF EAPRO, March 2011
- Decentralization and Taking Pilots to Scale in East Asia and the Pacific Region, UNICEF EAPRO November 2008, Steven Woodhouse and Kelsey Atwood
- Effects of Decentralization on Primary Education: Phase I – A Survey of East Asia and the Pacific Islands, UNICEF EAPRO, July 2006, Suzanne Hinsz and Mahesh Patel, with Cliff Meyers and Anna Dammert
- The Private Sector and Health Services Delivery in the EAP Region
- Decentralization and Local Governance in Asia and the Pacific, Improving Local Service Delivery for the MDGs, UNICEF EAPRO, UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok, UNCDF, and UNESCO initiative (see individual country reports below)
- Report on an Audit of the Management of Zones Offices (2006/11)

Other Reports & Studies

- Jeni Klugman, Decentralization: A Survey from a Child Welfare Perspective, Innocenti Occasional Papers, Economic and Social Policy Series no. 61, September 1997.
- Cecilia Braslavsky, Decentralization and Equity: Opportunities and Limitations of Contemporary Educational Policies, International Conference on Federalism, Quebec, October 1999.
- Pr. Leonard Joy, Decentralization and Human Rights: A systemic approach, November 2003.
- Paul Lundberg, Decentralized Governance and a Human Rights-based Approach to Development. 2003.

Equity Documents

- Narrowing the gaps to meet the goals (September 2010)
- Progress for Children – Achieving the MDGs with Equity (September 2010)
- Boys & Girls in the Lifecycle (2011)

Country Documents (Annual Reports, Situation Analysis, Country Profiles, Country Programmes, etc.)

- Cambodia, China, DPRK, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, The Philippines, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Viet Nam

Country Reports and Studies

Cambodia

- Improving Local Service Delivery for the MDGs in Asia: Water and Sanitation Sector in Cambodia

China

- UNICEF China: Urban Services and Governance, Hana Bixi, UNICEF China. June 2009.
- UNICEF and Chinese National Development and Reform Commission. Policy Research to Coordinate Development in Urban and Rural Areas and Ensure Equal Access to Basic Public Services during the Twelfth Five-Year Plan Period, Sun Changxue Huang Yunpeng et al., UNICEF China. November 1, 2009.

Indonesia

- UNICEF Indonesia Issues Papers, Making Decentralization Work for Children in Indonesia, August 2012
- UNICEF. UNICEF-Indonesia Mid-Term Review, Draft Report of country office decentralization Task Force, UNICEF Indonesia. 10 July 2008.
- Social Policy Study – Input to Mid Term Review 2008 – UNICEF Indonesia (June-July 2008)
- UNICEF. A review of the sub-national presence of UNICEF in Indonesia, UNICEF Indonesia. April 2008
- Can fiscal decentralization mitigate child poverty and inequality in Indonesia?, Mizuho Okimoto, UNICEF Indonesia, December 2007

Mongolia

- Improving Local Service Delivery for the MDGs in Asia: Rural Water Supply and Sanitation in Mongolia (2009)

Philippines

- UNICEF Philippine Country Programme Evaluation (August 2010)
- Improving Local Service Delivery for the MDGs in Asia: the case of the Philippines (PIDS, 2009)
- Role of fiscal performance of LGUs in increasing local investments for children, Rosario G. Manasan, UNICEF Philippines

Thailand

- Decentralization and the budget for social services at Tambon administrative level (Thailand)

Viet Nam

- UNICEF. Capacity Development for local Governments: practical experience from UNICEF's Viet Nam Water Supply, environment and Sanitation Programme, UNICEF Viet Nam. 2006.

ROSA

- Evaluation of UNICEF's strategic positioning in India (December 2011)
- Assessment of UNICEF Bangladesh Approach to Leveraging (May 2010)

General Reference documents (World Bank, ADB, UNDP, UNFPA, etc.)

UNDP

- Evaluation of UNDP contribution to strengthening Local Governance Participation, UNDP Evaluation Office, December 2010.
- Building Bridges Between The State & The People, An Overview of Trends and Developments in Public Administration and Local Governance, UNDP. September 2010.
- Building Bridges Between The State & The People, An Overview of UNDP's Recent and Current Interventions in Public Administration and Local Governance in Asia Pacific, UNDP. August 2010.
- UNDP, Global Event Working Paper, Capacity Development Strategies to Support Decentralization in Asia, 2010
- A User's Guide to Measuring Local Governance, UNDP. 2009
- Designing Inclusive and Accountable Local Democratic Institutions, A Practitioner's Guide, Regional Initiative-Local democracy in Asia, UNDP. 2008.
- UNDP Support for Local Governance (SLG) for Enhanced Island Development Project, Evaluation Report, Ortega, UNDP Fiji Multi Country Office, Suva. 2008.
- UNDP Primer, Fiscal Decentralization and Poverty Reduction. November 2005.
- Decentralized Governance for Development: A Combined Practice Note on Decentralization, Local Governance and Urban/Rural Development, UNDP. April 2004
- The Role of Participation and Partnership in Decentralised Governance: A Brief Synthesis of Policy Lessons and Recommendations of Nine Country case Studies on Service Delivery for the Poor, UNDP
- Decentralization: A sample of definitions, 1999

World Bank

- World Bank, 'Decentralization in Client Countries: An Evaluation of World Bank Support, 1990-2007', 2008
- World Bank Policy Research Working Paper, Decentralization and Service Delivery, 2005

ADB

- Special Evaluation Study (SES:INO 2010-15), Asian Development Bank Support for Decentralization in Indonesia, ADB. July 2010

OECD

- OECD/DAC Evaluation Series, Lessons Learned on Donor Support to Decentralization and Local Governance, 2004

Annex 4
Key Informant Interview Guide
Budgeted Time: 50 minutes

Note: Record country type, history of decentralization.

1. **Introduction:** The purpose of this evaluation is twofold: learning and accountability. More specifically, as indicated in the TOR, the evaluation seeks to:
 - assess UNICEF’s strategies and interventions geared towards the realization of the rights of children and women in decentralizing environments in the East Asia and Pacific region; and
 - identify strategic issues and options for UNICEF’s future interventions.

The evaluation will particularly focus on the extent to which UNICEF’s strategies in support to/in responding to decentralization are appropriate for contributing to more equitable results for children.

The specific objectives of this evaluation are:

- To assess the extent to which UNICEF’s strategies, implicit or explicit, aimed at achieving results for children in decentralizing environments are relevant and effective.
 - To distill good practices and lessons learned from UNICEF’s engagement in decentralizing environments, especially in the areas of capacity development, policy advocacy, and partnerships.
 - To formulate recommendations on strategic issues and options with a view to improving UNICEF’s strategies and interventions
2. **Confidentiality:** We want to assure you that **this is a confidential interview**. Nothing you say will be personally attributed to you in the report. We will, however, be listing the names of key informants we have spoken with.
 3. **Purpose:** The purpose of this **interview** is to:
 - get deeper insights into an assessment of UNICEF’s decentralization related initiatives of the CO
 - identify strategies and interventions that have and have not worked; and why, and,
 - recommend key actions to strengthen efforts in decentralizing contexts that UNICEF can take to improve outcomes for children and women, particularly the most disadvantaged.

These questions are only a guide. We are open to any strategic or other issues that you might want to flag or raise for discussion.

Questions:

1. **Relevance:**
 - To what extent have UNICEF’s interventions in decentralizing environments **been aligned with** (a) the national situation of decentralization and (b) key country priorities?

- Can you identify the core elements of the main UNICEF strategies, implicit or explicit, that the CO has followed?
- Can you identify any specific strategic shifts that the CO has been able to bring about in decentralization related strategies or approaches following the new equity focus?

2. Effectiveness:

- What are the main macro or national level contextual factors that contributed to or hindered the effectiveness of UNICEF's efforts to address or respond to decentralization processes within the country?
- Can you identify some UNICEF-specific factors that have contributed to or hindered the effectiveness of UNICEF's responses to decentralization processes?

Here we pick up the 3-4 main strategic interventions and approaches the CO has adopted (mentioned in the beginning) and ask specific questions relating to each of them:

- Are UNICEF's strategies and interventions (including but not limited to field offices, piloting and scaling of pilots, policy efforts) appropriate for responding to the opportunities and challenges presented by decentralization?
 - Why / why not?
 - To what extent has UNICEF's presence (or absence) at the sub-national level (field offices) contributed to the organization's effectiveness in programming in decentralized environments?
 - Please describe the relationship between local work and national efforts. What is the theory of change or intended relationship between these levels of work? Is this working as intended?
- Were UNICEF's strategies and interventions to address children's issues in the context of decentralization appropriate in light of capacity deficiencies at national levels / at local levels?
- Were activities undertaken to increase the capacity of central and local governments with regards to different types of decentralization?
- What are the perceived capacities and capacity gaps among UNICEF staff in implementing strategies or activities that improve responses for children in decentralizing contexts?
 - What is the knowledge level of UNICEF staff on key decentralization issues?
 - What are the perceived gaps in capacity of UNICEF staff in responding to decentralization?
 - How has UNICEF organized itself and particularly its management in response to decentralization?
- Cross-cutting issue:

To what extent has UNICEF's partnership approach been effective in supporting and / or advocating for child rights at central and local level in the context of decentralization?

3. **Sustainability:** The term itself has many connotations. But from your understanding of it:
 - To what extent and at what levels has UNICEF’s support contributed to an enabling environment to achieve equitable results for children in decentralized environments?

4. **Good and poor practices:** We can learn from both good and bad practices.
 - What would you identify as **good country practices** in promoting equitable results for children in decentralizing environments? For example: good practices in (a) policy advocacy; (b) partnership development; (c) promoting equity and human rights: (d) any others?
 - Can you also flag why you regard them as being ‘good’ and what the key learnings have been in each case?

 - What would you identify as **poor or failed country practices** in promoting equitable results for children in decentralizing environments? Including practices in:(a) policy advocacy; (b) partnership development; (c) promoting equity and human rights: (d) any others?
 - Can you also flag why you regard them as being ‘poor or failed’ and what the key learnings have been in each case?

5. **UNICEF’s comparative advantage: Looking back:**
 - What would you identify as UNICEF’s comparative advantage with respect to decentralization?
 - What do you see as challenges or disadvantages for UNICEF with respect to working in decentralizing contexts?

 - Please discuss the prevalence of a ‘Whole UN’ approach to decentralization in your country and UNICEF’s particular contribution within it.

6. **Rating of UNICEF’s contribution:** This is the last question we have for you. We want you to rate three questions on a scale of 1-5: (with 1 being very minimal contribution and 5 being very large contribution)
 - How would you rate **UNICEF’s contribution in promoting decentralization approaches that improve equitable results for children?** (with 1 being very minimal contribution and 5 being very large contribution):

 - To what extent have **UNICEF’s strategies and interventions been appropriate** for addressing the opportunities and challenges to equitable results for children presented by decentralization? (with 1 being very inappropriate and 5 being very appropriate).

7. **Closing:** Thank you. That brings our interview to an end. Are there any questions or issues you would like to raise that we have not covered?

Thank you.

Annex 5
Three Surveys
Survey 1
(Deputy Representatives and Selected Country Office Focal Points and Programme Officers)

UNICEF decentralization survey

- 1. Which Country Office do you work in:**
- 2. How would you assess the extent to which your Country Plan responds to the national situation of decentralization?**
 - a. Very responsive, somewhat responsive, neither responsive nor non responsive, somewhat non-responsive.**

3. Please assess the following UNICEF knowledge and capacities. (Very Good, Good, Fair, Poor, Very Poor).

Country office knowledge of decentralization processes and issues

Country office capacity to respond to decentralization through appropriate interventions

Zonal office (if applicable) knowledge of decentralization processes and issues
Zonal office (if applicable) capacity to manage decentralization related programming.

Regional office technical support on decentralization programming received by the Country office

Regional office support on decentralization strategy received by the Country office

If you would like to explain any of your answers above please do so.

- 4. Please rate your UNICEF on the following dimensions related to effectiveness. (Very effective, effective, neither effective nor ineffective, ineffective, very ineffective).**

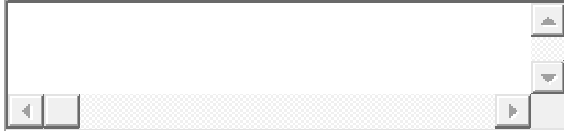
UNICEF partnerships with sub-national and local governments to improve the impacts of decentralization on children.

UNICEF partnerships with non-governmental organizations to improve the impacts of decentralization on children.

UNICEF partnerships with other UN agencies to improve the impacts of decentralization on children.

UNICEF's advocacy efforts related to improving the impacts of decentralization on children

If you would like to explain any of your answers above please do so.



5. Are UNICEF strategies and interventions appropriate for addressing the opportunities and challenges presented by decentralization?

- Yes
- Somewhat
- No

Please explain your answer.



6. Please describe up to 3 good practices, or 'things that have worked,' in UNICEF's work related to improving the positive impacts of decentralization on children (or mitigating the negative impacts of decentralization on children).



7. Please describe up to 3 negative experiences, or 'things that have not worked well or fully,' in UNICEF's strategies and work related to decentralization.



8. Please describe any key constraints facing UNICEF in its efforts at strengthening decentralization related efforts to address the needs of children. (Bullet point answers are fine).



9. What do you see as critical interventions or steps that UNICEF should do in the future to advance the decentralization related agenda for children? (Bullet point answers are fine).



**Survey 2
Section Chiefs**

UNICEF decentralization survey

1. Which country office are you in?

2. How would you assess the extent to which your Section Plan responds to the national situation of decentralization? (very responsive, somewhat responsive, neither responsive nor non-responsive, somewhat non-responsive, non-responsive)

3. Please assess the following UNICEF knowledge and capacities. (Very good, good, Fair, Poor, Very Poor)

Country office knowledge of decentralization processes and issues

Country office capacity to respond to decentralization efforts

Zonal office (if applicable) knowledge of decentralization processes and issues

Zonal office (if applicable) capacity to managed decentralization related programming.

Regional office technical support on decentralization programming received by the Country office

Regional office support on decentralization strategy received by the Country office

If you would like to explain any of your answers above please do so.



4. Please rate your Section on the following dimensions related to effectiveness. (Very effective, effective, neither effective nor ineffective, ineffective, very ineffective)

Section's decentralization strategy.

Section's decentralization related programming.

Section's partnerships with national governments to improve decentralization processes.

Section's partnerships with sub-national and local governments to improve the impacts of decentralization on children.

Section's partnerships with non-governmental organizations to improve the impacts of decentralization on children.

Section's partnerships with other UN agencies to improve the impacts of decentralization on children.

UNICEF's advocacy efforts related to improving the impacts of decentralization on children

If you would like to explain any of your answers above please do so.

5. Are UNICEF strategies in your sector appropriate for addressing the opportunities and challenges presented by decentralization?

- Yes
- Somewhat
- No

Please explain your answer.

6. Please describe up to 3 good practices, or 'things that have worked,' in your section's work related to improving the positive impacts of decentralization on children (or mitigating the negative impacts of decentralization on children).

7. Please describe up to 3 negative experiences, or 'things that have not worked well or fully,' in your section's strategies and work related to decentralization.

8. Please describe any key constraints facing your section's efforts at strengthening decentralization related efforts to address the needs of children. (Bullet point answers are fine).

9. What do you see as critical interventions or steps that UNICEF should do in the future to advance the decentralization related agenda for children? (Bullet point answers are fine).

**Survey 3
Heads of Zonal Offices**

UNICEF decentralization survey

- 1. Which Zonal Office (Sub-National office) do you work in:**

- 2. How would you assess the extent to which your Zonal Office Plan responds to the local situation of decentralization?
Very responsive, somewhat responsive, neither responsive nor non-responsive, somewhat non-responsive, non responsive**

- 3. Please assess the following UNICEF knowledge and capacities. (very good, good, fair, poor, very poor)**

Zonal office knowledge of decentralization processes and issues

Zonal office capacity to respond to decentralization efforts

Zonal office capacity to manage decentralization related programming.

Technical support on decentralization programming received from the Country office.

Strategic support on decentralization strategy received from the Country office.

If you would like to explain any of your answers above please do so.



- 4. Please rate your Zonal office on the following dimensions related to effectiveness. (Very effective, effective, neither effective nor ineffective, ineffective, very ineffective)**

Zonal office decentralization related strategy.

Zonal office decentralization related programming.

Zonal office partnerships with sub-national and local governments to improve the impacts of decentralization on children.

Zonal office partnerships with non-governmental organizations to improve the impacts of decentralization on children.

Zonal office partnerships with other UN agencies to improve the impacts of decentralization on children.

Zonal office advocacy efforts related to improving the impacts of decentralization on children
UNICEF's use of experience at the local level to inform national efforts related to improving the impacts of decentralization on children

If you would like to explain any of your answers above please do so.

5. Are UNICEF strategies and interventions at the zonal (sub-national) level appropriate for addressing the opportunities and challenges presented by decentralization?

- Yes
- Somewhat
- No

Please explain your answer.

6. Please describe up to 3 good practices, or 'things that have worked,' in UNICEF's zonal office / sub-national work related to improving the positive impacts of decentralization on children (or mitigating the negative impacts of decentralization on children).

7. Please describe up to 3 negative experiences, or 'things that have not worked well or fully,' in UNICEF's zonal office / sub-national strategies and work related to decentralization.

8. Please describe any key constraints facing UNICEF in its efforts at strengthening decentralization related efforts to address the needs of children. (Bullet point answers are fine).

9. What do you see as critical interventions or steps that UNICEF should do in the future to advance the decentralization related agenda for children? (Bullet point answers are fine).

Annex 6

List of People Interviewed

Overall Guidance and Support:

1. Ada Ocampo, Regional Advisor, Evaluation, EAPRO

For Inception report:

1. Dan Toole, Regional Director, EAPRO
2. Festo Kavishe, Deputy Regional Director, EAPRO
3. David Parker, Chief of Planning and Programming, EAPRO
4. Mahesh Patel, Regional Adviser – Social Policy and Economic Analysis, EAPRO
5. Lotta Sylwander, Representative Viet Nam

Key Informant Interviews: (listed alphabetically by country)

1. Sun Ah Kim Suh, Deputy Representative, Cambodia
2. Gillian Mellsop, Representative, China
3. Desiree Jongsma, Representative, DPRK (in writing)
4. Angela Kearney, Representative, Indonesia
5. Timothy Schaffter, Representative, Lao PDR
6. Victor Karunan, Deputy Representative, Malaysia
7. Gilles Fagninou, Deputy Representative, Mongolia
8. Shalini Bahuguna, Acting Representative, Myanmar
9. Isiye Ndombi, Representative, Pacific Islands
10. Bijaya Rajbhandari, Representative, Thailand
11. Alim Abdul, Deputy Representative, The Philippines
12. Hongwei Gao, Representative, Timor Leste
13. Jesper Moller, Deputy Representative, Viet Nam

Others:

1. Richard Bridle, Former Representative, Cambodia
2. Colin Kirk, Director, Evaluation Office