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UNICEF report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit

Summary

   In accordance with Executive Board decision 2001/4, the present report summarizes the response of UNICEF to the recommendations contained in recent reports of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) that are directly relevant to UNICEF. The eight reports and one note included in this report were issued by the JIU from September 2011 through August 2012.

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1.   The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) annually issues reports and notes addressed to the executive heads of United Nations organizations that have accepted the Unit's statute. Each report or note contains a series of recommendations for consideration by either the executive heads or the legislative bodies of the organizations. The UNICEF report to its Executive Board provides, inter alia (a) a brief overview of the UNICEF response to relevant reports issued by the JIU from September 2011 through August 2012; and (b) comments on JIU recommendations that have been directed for consideration by the Executive Board (see annex 2). The complete reports and notes of the JIU may be obtained through the JIU website (www.unjiu.org) or through the hyperlinked titles of each report in section II of the present document.

2.   Since submission of the previous report (E/ICEF/2012/4) to the Executive Board in 2012, UNICEF has continued to work with the JIU on various reviews conducted under its auspices and to follow up on the reports' recommendations. This interaction on issues of common interest has increased the relevance of JIU reports, improved the implementation of its recommendations and enhanced transparency. Furthermore, member organizations of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination have continued to provide consolidated responses to various JIU reports.

II. Overview of Joint Inspection Unit reports and recommendations

3.   The eight JIU reports and one JIU note of direct relevance to UNICEF are summarized below. Additional comments are provided on each report and the relevant recommendations.

A. Procurement reforms in the United Nations system (JIU/NOTE/2011/1)

4.   The objective of the note was to assess the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and coherence of procurement policies, practices and reform initiatives adopted by organizations in the United Nations system and to identify potential good practices and areas for improvement. The report covered the following areas: (a) procurement strategy development; (b) supply chain management approach; (c) sustainable procurement; (d) procurement from developing countries; (e) ethics management; (f) vendor sanctioning and procurement challenge mechanisms; (g) common coding system; (h) risk management; (i) monitoring, reporting and performance management; and (j) inter-agency coordination and collaboration.

UNICEF Comments

5.   UNICEF takes note of the report and has already made significant progress on many of its recommendations. UNICEF executive management has purview over procurement complexities and operations, given that the director of the Supply

Division is part of the Global Management Team. The enterprise resource planning system that UNICEF rolled out in early 2012 integrates operations at headquarters and in the field into a single system. This system increases efficiency and provides monitoring tools and performance indicators that can be expanded to local procurement, including local procurement that uses long-term agreements. It should be noted that in 2011, 93 per cent of UNICEF international procurement used long-term agreements. As part of the organization-wide approach to systematizing risk management, the Supply Division and field offices completed their first enterprise risk management assessment, which included the management of supply and logistics.

6.   Furthermore, in 2012 the UNICEF Supply Division conducted a pilot study of a vendor sanction board that would sanction vendors who do not adhere to the United Nations Code of Conduct. UNICEF is currently revising its procurement policy to include suggestions from the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, issued by the International Labour Organization.

B. Multilingualism in the United Nations system organizations: status of implementation (JIU/REP/2011/4)

7.   The objective of the report was to assess the status of implementation of multilingualism across United Nations system organizations by reviewing aspects related to language services and uses. This includes access to information and the development of multilingual websites, with a goal of ensuring parity among the official languages and the working languages of the secretariats of the organizations.

8.   The report reviews key dimensions of multilingualism in United Nations organizations, analysing its rationale and policy implications and identifying effective measures to foster its implementation. The research covered conference services, recruitment, training, outreach and institutional partnerships, among other issues.

UNICEF Comments

9.   UNICEF welcomes the recommendations outlined in this report and fully supports the objective of implementing multilingualism across the United Nations system, provided that the necessary funding is made available. UNICEF notes with concern the potential cost implications of maintaining multilingual websites and is pleased to see that the recommendations refer to the need for adequate funding to enable implementation of the recommendations.

C. Accountability frameworks in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2011/5)

10.   The objective of the report was to map out and assess accountability frameworks in the United Nations system and identify gaps. The report also analysed the components in the organizations that do not possess an independent formal accountability framework document. In addition, the report identified good practices in developing and implementing accountability frameworks and

components, including 17 benchmarks that can be used to measure implementation of such frameworks.

UNICEF Comments

11.   UNICEF welcomes the findings and recommendations of the JIU report on accountability frameworks in the United Nations system. In particular it welcomes the conclusion that effective and efficient accountability frameworks go beyond internal controls and should be based on transparency and a culture of accountability. The benchmarks identified in the report provide the United Nations system with useful guidance on strengthening its respective accountability frameworks. They also serve as a basis for building common principles and standards that accommodate distinct operational models across the system.

D.   Business continuity in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2011/6)

12.   The objective of the review on business continuity was to assess, among United Nations system organizations: (a) the existence of business continuity strategies, policies and plans and the commonalities and differences between them; (b) experiences and best practices relating to their implementation; (c) liaison and coordination mechanisms in business continuity and crisis preparedness; and (d) the functioning and staffing of specialized preparedness and business continuity units for crisis management, including their financing frameworks and the funding mechanisms for their operation.

UNICEF Comments

13.   UNICEF welcomes this report and notes that it makes a number of valuable observations and recommendations that UNICEF will look to address.

E.   The investigation function in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2011/7)

14.   This review follows up on two previous JIU reports on oversight, "Strengthening the investigation function in United Nations system organizations" and "Oversight lacunae in the United Nations system". The objective of this review was to provide recommendations leading to system-wide coherence and harmonization among the oversight mechanisms of the United Nations system in discharging its responsibilities with regard to investigations.

UNICEF Comments

15.   UNICEF welcomes the JIU report on strengthening the investigation function in the United Nations system. UNICEF agrees with many of the report's recommendations and is already operating in a way that is consistent with them. UNICEF does not, however, agree with the principle behind recommendation 8 of the report. UNICEF notes that the differences in the functional set-up of each United

Nations organization would prevent the establishment of an efficient or effective centralized investigation function.

F. Information and communication technology (ICT) governance in the United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2011/9)

16.   United Nations system organizations recognize the ever-increasing importance of information and communication technologies (ICT) as a strategic tool for achieving organizational missions and goals. ICTs are no longer used solely for maximizing efficiencies; rather they are essential to implementation of core mandates. This new reality necessitates special attention to the way organizational investments for ICT interventions are selected and overseen. The objective of the review was to conduct a comparative analysis of the different ICT governance frameworks, practices and processes in the various United Nations system organizations, with a view to identifying best practices and lessons learned, thereby to promote effective ICT governance.

UNICEF Comments

17.   UNICEF commends the scope and consultative process and ultimately the high quality of findings in this report. The conclusions of the report provide timely and useful means for recalibrating governance instruments for ICT activities. The report could have benefited from some additional "best practice" recommendations on how project portfolios are determined and dynamically managed beyond regular budget cycles. Since private-sector profit maximization scores do not apply to UNICEF, focusing solely on the "degree of strategy alignment" will result in a failure to reflect other areas of importance, such as the risks involved in implementation failure.

18.   UNICEF especially welcomes recommendation 11, which highlights the need and opportunity for improving inter-agency cooperation on issues related to ICT. The recommendation could have also addressed how the United Nations will approach ICTs as they pertain to the functioning of the United Nations, in addition to the increased appearance of ICTs as part of the development agenda for Member States.

19.   UNICEF is pleased to note that the majority of ICT oversight policies and instruments highlighted in the "best practice" section of the report have been implemented by UNICEF in recent years. However, although all key components are already in place, full implementation of these policies at headquarters and the field will likely extend until the end of 2013, given that staff competencies are being updated through a recently initiated competency alignment programme.

G. Staff-management relations within the United Nations (JIU/REP/2011/10)

20.   The objective of the report was to identify and promote conditions that would advance staff-management relations at all levels in the United Nations system, specifically at the Secretariat, at duty stations and in the separately administered

organs, programmes, tribunals, peace operations and political missions. The scope of the report is limited to the processes and mechanisms of staff-management relations; it does not address substantive human resources issues.

UNICEF Comments

21.   UNICEF has a collaborative and constructive system of staff-management relations that is characterized by mutual trust and respect. It also has a systematic consultative approach on all issues affecting staff welfare, work conditions and human resources polices, as mandated by the United Nations staff regulations. Furthermore, Staff Association representatives are statutorily designated members of UNICEF country, regional and global management teams.

22.   UNICEF welcomes the positive recognition of UNICEF staff-management relations in the JIU report. UNICEF notes with concern the report's occasionally adversarial outlook on the state of staff-management relations in the wider United Nations system, and the potential repercussions this might have on such relations within UNICEF.

23.   UNICEF agrees with recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 of the report and believes that its administrative instruction CF/AI/2011-006 on Staff Relations, which was developed following extensive consultations with the Global Staff Association, has already addressed them.

24.   While recommendation 5 is not explicitly directed at the UNICEF Executive Director or its Executive Board, UNICEF notes that it requests the Secretary-General to present to the General Assembly a change in United Nations staff regulations (that apply to UNICEF) that would recognize the right of United Nations staff to collective bargaining. UNICEF would like to note that the determination of staff salaries, entitlements and benefits within the United Nations common system falls under the authority of the International Civil Service Commission, which is an expert body established by, and accountable to, the General Assembly. United Nations common system staff, including UNICEF staff, are represented in the Commission through their staff federations, which then participate in the consultative decision-making process.

H.   Evaluation of the scope, organization, effectiveness and approach of the work of the United Nations in mine action (JIU/REP/2011/11)

25.   As part of its programme of work for 2010, the JIU conducted a review of the scope, organization, effectiveness and approach of the work of the United Nations in mine action, as requested by the General Assembly in December 2009. The objective of the review was to provide member States with an independent perspective on the work of the United Nations in this area and to recommend improvements to coordination and support to countries contaminated by landmines and other explosive remnants of war.

UNICEF Comments

26.   UNICEF welcomes the report and agrees with its findings and conclusions. The six recommendations presented will serve to strengthen United Nations support in this field. The report focuses on the following substantive areas for the Inter-agency Coordination Group on Mine Action: (a) strengthen support to victims and survivors; (b) establish baselines of reliable data; (c) review the terms of reference of the United Nations Mine Action Service and the tasks of other agencies to redress perceived weaknesses in United Nations coordination; (d) improve staff capacity; (e) develop an evaluation framework for mine action; and (f) revise the terms of reference of the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action. UNICEF considers these recommendations as examples of "good practices" in United Nations coordination, including on transparency and accountability, that have been successfully implemented in other areas of United Nations work over the past several years. The implementation of these recommendations is critical for system-wide support in mine action to be both effective and efficient, and for UNICEF to be able to deliver results for affected populations within a coordinated United Nations framework.

I.   The management of sick leave in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2012/2)

27.   The objective of the report was to review the manner in which international organizations record, manage and report sick leave. The report proposes improvements that will enable United Nations system organizations to clarify, improve and harmonize the rules and regulations pertaining to sick leave, prevent abuse and, more importantly, fulfil their duty of care with regard to the health and safety of staff.

UNICEF Comments

28.   UNICEF welcomes this report, and in particular, supports the decision of the Chief Executives Board to adopt an occupational safety and health policy. UNICEF agrees that this should be an inter-agency initiative, with occupational safety and health as an integral part of the United Nations Medical Services' role.

III.   Ongoing/forthcoming Joint Inspection Unit reports and notes

29.   UNICEF is participating in ongoing JIU reviews scheduled for completion in 2012 or 2013, and it looks forward to presenting its comments on these reviews to the Executive Board during its first regular session in 2014. Below is the preliminary list of such reports:

(a)   Financing for humanitarian operations in the United Nations system (expected completion: 2012)

(b)   Review of individual consultancy policies and practices in the United Nations (expected completion: 2012)

(c) System-wide review of safety and security (expected completion: 2012)

(d) Staff recruitment in United Nations system organizations: a comparative analysis and benchmarking framework (expected completion: 2012)

(e) Review of strategic planning in United Nations system organizations (expected completion: 2012)

(f) Staff-management relations in the specialized agencies and the United Nations common system (expected completion: 2012)

(g) Review of the reference-checking process (expected completion: 2013)

(h) Lump sum payments in lieu of entitlements (expected completion: 2013)

(i) Flexible working-time arrangements in the organizations of the United Nations system (expected completion: 2013)

(j) Records and archives management policies within the United Nations (expected completion: 2013)

(k) The assessment of policy and practices in the use of long-term agreements in procurement in the United Nations system (expected completion: 2013)

(l) Comparative analysis of the use of enterprise resource planning systems in United Nations system organizations (expected completion: 2013)

(m) Review of system-wide joint programming and administrative arrangements of operational activities within the United Nations system (expected completion: 2013).

Annex 1

List of Joint Inspection Unit reports and recommendations

JIU report symbol	Report title	Total number of recommendations contained in the report	Total number of recommendations of relevance to UNICEF	Total number of recommendations of relevance to the UNICEF Executive Board*
JIU/NOTE/2011/1	Procurement reforms in the United Nations system	18	10	0
JIU/REP/2011/4	Multilingualism in the United Nations system organizations: status of implementation	15	12	4
JIU/REP/2011/5	Accountability frameworks in the United Nations system	7	3	1
JIU/REP/2011/6	Business continuity in the United Nations system	9	7	1
JIU/REP/2011/7	The investigation function in the United Nations system	8	7	2
JIU/REP/2011/9	Information and communication technology (ICT) governance in the United Nations system organizations	11	10	1
JIU/REP/2011/10	Staff-management relations within the United Nations	6	4	0
JIU/REP/2011/11	Evaluation of the scope, organization, effectiveness and approach of the work of the United Nations in mine action	7	1	0
JIU/REP/2012/2	The management of sick leave in the United Nations system	7	6	1

 * For details of these recommendations, see annex 2.

Annex 2

Summary of the remarks of UNICEF on JIU recommendations addressed to the Executive Board

Relevant recommendations	*Remarks*

Procurement reforms in the United Nations system (JIU/NOTE/2011/1)

The recommendations in this report do not require action by the UNICEF Executive Board.

Multilingualism in the United Nations system organizations: status of implementation (JIU/REP/2011/4)

Recommendation 6

When creating new institutional bodies that would require the provision of conference services, the legislative bodies of the United Nations system organizations should plan for the budgetary resources associated with the resulting additional workload, in particular for translation and interpretation.	UNICEF supports and welcomes this recommendation.

Recommendation 8

The legislative bodies of the organizations of the United Nations system should ensure that the necessary resources are allocated within the organizations to achieve effective succession planning and dispense targeted training to candidates to language examinations.	UNICEF supports and welcomes this recommendation.

Recommendation 12

The legislative bodies of the organizations of the United Nations system should direct and approve the necessary support to the executive heads to develop multilingual websites in all their official or working languages, with due attention to the language specificities of the duty stations concerned.	UNICEF agrees with the recommendation and notes that it currently maintains websites in five of the official United Nations languages. However, in times of austerity, the financial implications of maintaining multilingual websites are considerable. Substantial resources are required for translation, particularly in a dynamic environment.

Recommendation 15

As a matter of policy, the legislative bodies of the organizations of the United Nations system should endorse, including through budgetary channels, the arrangements required to ensure effective compliance in delivering the organizations' core work in all official and working languages.	UNICEF supports and welcomes this recommendation.

Relevant recommendations	*Remarks*

Accountability frameworks in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2011/5)

Recommendation 2

The legislative bodies of United Nations system organizations, which have not yet done so, should take decisions based on a results-based management approach and ensure that the necessary resources are allocated to implement the organizations' strategic plans and results-based management.

The UNICEF medium-term strategic plan (MTSP) 2006-2013 aims to achieve progress towards realizing children's rights by using available resources as efficiently and effectively as possible through the application of results-based management (RBM) approaches in each of its business units and for the MTSP as a whole. The UNICEF Executive Board has endorsed this approach through the approval of the MTSP in 2005, and subsequently after the 2008 midterm review and the 2010 in-depth review of the organizational strategic plan. (E/ICEF/2005/11)

The UNICEF MTSP for 2014-2017 will further reflect the centrality of strengthening the results focus and the efficient and effective management of UNICEF operations (E/ICEF/2012/5). Towards this result, in May 2012 UNICEF hosted an RBM consultation with members of the Executive Board and internal and external experts on sharpening the UNICEF results approach and frameworks. A peer review group was formed to strengthen RBM in developing the next MTSP. One of its roles is to provide inputs for development of the draft results frameworks and measurable indicators to track the progress of UNICEF contributions to results. The peer review group consists of experts on RBM from each of the regional groups of Member States of the Executive Board, along with RBM experts from sister agencies, including the United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, and World Food Programme.

Business continuity in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2011/6)

Recommendation 7

Legislative bodies of the United Nations organizations should, on the basis of the executive heads' budget proposals, provide the necessary financial and human resources for the implementation, continuous monitoring, maintenance and updating of the approved business continuity plans developed on the basis of the organization's Business Continuity policy/strategy.

UNICEF commenced its business continuity programme in 2007 and continues to regard business continuity as an organizational priority. This ensures that the necessary resources and capacity are already made available to support business continuity management requirements.

Relevant recommendations	*Remarks*
	The activities and costs related to business continuity management were included in the Executive Director's institutional budget proposal for 2012-2013 and approved by the Executive Board in September 2011. (E/ICEF/2011/AB/L.2; see pp. 8-9).

The investigation function in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2011/7)

Recommendation 4

The legislative bodies of United Nations system organizations which have not yet done so should direct their executive heads to ensure that internal oversight entities or investigation units are authorized to initiate investigations without the executive head's prior approval.	Based on the Charter of Authorities and Responsibilities of the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigation, the duties of its Director include but are not limited to:

  a. Receive reports of alleged misconduct and manage the UNICEF fraud reporting email hotline (integrity1@unicef.org);

  b. Conduct initial research regarding an allegation of misconduct;

  c. Assess the need for a detailed investigation;

  d. Conduct a detailed investigation or refer a matter to an individual or a group of individuals as appropriate, for the conduct of a detailed investigation;

  e. Provide audit, accounting, management, evaluation and related expertise in support of investigations and subsequent disciplinary proceedings.

Therefore, UNICEF has already delegated the responsibility to initiate investigations, and this function is independent of the Executive Office.

Recommendation 6

The legislative bodies of United Nations system organizations should review the adequacy of resources and staffing of the investigation function on the basis of the recommendations of the respective audit/oversight committees either annually or biennially depending on the organizations' budget cycle.	UNICEF welcomes and is supportive of this recommendation. The resources and staffing of the investigation function will be reviewed as part of the next budget cycle.

Relevant recommendations	*Remarks*

Information and communication technology (ICT) governance in the United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2011/9)

Recommendation 6

The legislative bodies of the United Nations system organizations should request the executive heads to present the corporate ICT strategies to Member States for their information and support.	UNICEF welcomes this recommendation.

Staff management relations within the United Nations (JIU/REP/2011/10)

The recommendations in this report do not require action by the UNICEF Executive Board.

Evaluation of the scope, organization, effectiveness and approach of the work of the United Nations in mine action (JIU/REP/2011/11)

The recommendations in this report do not require action by the UNICEF Executive Board.

The management of sick leave in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2012/2)

Recommendation 5

The legislative bodies of United Nations system organizations should require executive heads to provide them with comprehensive annual or biennial reports on sick leave, including statistical and cost data, and measures taken by the organization to reduce sick leave absenteeism.	UNICEF welcomes the core concept behind this recommendation. However, organizational priorities and the availability of resources, both internally and externally within the United Nations common system and United Nations Medical Services, will play a role in addressing absenteeism trends. While UNICEF can provide statistical and cost data on absenteeism, its Division of Human Resources is not currently equipped to provide a comprehensive annual or biennial report on sick leave. UNICEF is ready to work with other stakeholders to develop best practices and expertise on absence management and cost containment, as applicable.

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