



**MOPAN  
COMMON  
APPROACH**

**UNICEF 2009**

**February 19, 2010**

# Executive Summary

## Background

### UNICEF in 2009

- “ Recognised for clear and precise mandate
- “ Is viewed positively for its country focus on results, delegated decision making, and contributions to policy dialogue
- “ Procedures and use of country systems (e.g., financial management, audit, procurement) are a concern for donors

The MOPAN Common Approach assesses the organisational effectiveness of multilateral institutions based on the perceptions of MOPAN members and direct partners of these organisations. It is an exercise developed by a group of donor countries in order to contribute to improved performance of multilateral organisations.<sup>1</sup>

In an ideal world, the effectiveness of multilateral organisations would be assessed by their contributions to the results achieved by developing countries. While many multilaterals are improving their results frameworks and data-gathering systems, these are not yet developed enough across organisations to be used as the basis of a systematic effectiveness assessment. As a proxy, the MOPAN Common Approach therefore measures the effectiveness of multilateral organisations by seeking perceptions of respondents on behaviours, systems and processes that should enable these organisations to contribute to the achievement of development results at a country level.<sup>2</sup>

The MOPAN Common Approach is the successor to the Annual MOPAN Survey, conducted annually since 2003; however, it is broader and deeper than the previous surveys. It brings in the views of national partners of multilateral organisations and those of multilateral donors, that is, MOPAN members at both headquarters and country level.<sup>3</sup> The MOPAN Common Approach takes a more systematic look at organisational effectiveness and is organised around the widely recognised balanced scorecard approach that examines four dimensions of organisational effectiveness . strategic management, operational management, relationship management, and knowledge management.<sup>4</sup> Within each of these dimensions or quadrants, the MOPAN Common Approach has developed key performance indicators (KPIs) of organisational effectiveness, and micro-indicators (MIs) that specify the measurement criteria for the KPIs.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> MOPAN is an informal network of 15 donor countries. In 2009, members include Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, The Netherlands, Norway, The Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. For more information on MOPAN, please visit [www.mopanonline.org](http://www.mopanonline.org).

<sup>2</sup> Whether or not a multilateral organisation does in fact contribute to the achievement of development results, will also depend on whether or not it is addressing the right development issues, with the right instruments, and at an appropriate scale, given the country context in which it operates.

<sup>3</sup> The terms “donors” and “MOPAN members” are used interchangeably in this report and refer only to the respondents in this assessment.

<sup>4</sup> Organisational effectiveness is defined by MOPAN as “being organised to support clients/partners to produce and deliver expected results.”

<sup>5</sup> The MOPAN Common Approach includes 19 KPIs, but one of these . linking aid management to performance . was not considered relevant for UNICEF and was therefore not applied.

The MOPAN Common Approach is intended to generate relevant and credible information to assist MOPAN members in meeting domestic accountability requirements and to support dialogue between MOPAN members, multilateral organisations and their direct partners, with a specific focus on improving organisational learning and effectiveness over time. The Common Approach complements other ongoing assessment processes such as the bi-annual Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development . Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) Survey on Monitoring the Paris Declaration and the annual reports of the Common Performance Assessment System (COMPAS) by the Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs).

In 2009, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was assessed at an institutional level and across nine countries: Ethiopia, Guatemala, Mozambique, Pakistan, Peru, Senegal, Serbia, Thailand and Uganda. Two of these countries . Mozambique and Pakistan . participate in the UN Delivering as One (DAO) pilots.

The assessment draws on the perceptions of three groups of respondents: MOPAN members in-country and at headquarters, as well as direct partners (both government and NGOs) of the multilateral organisation. These were collected through a stakeholder survey that was conducted primarily online, although a small proportion of direct partners completed it via face-to-face interviews for practical reasons. A total of 203 respondents participated in the survey on UNICEF.

## **Main Findings**

UNICEF is recognised by respondents for the clarity and strength of its mandate, its positive relationships with government partners, and its operational capacity in development and humanitarian contexts . it is seen to be efficient and to get things done on the ground. At the same time, respondents note the tension that is perceived in UNICEF between its strong track record as an implementer and a more strategic role of advocating norms and policies.

UNICEF's strongest ratings in the MOPAN Common Approach relate to organisational practices and behaviours that have important repercussions at the country level: delegation of decision-making, results focus of country programming, and valued contributions to policy dialogue.

UNICEF is seen by respondents to do adequately in implementing several aspects of the aid effectiveness agenda, including harmonisation of procedures at country level. On the indicator that assesses use of country systems . i.e., the extent to which the organisation uses government systems for procurement, audit, financial reporting, and other procedures . UNICEF receives an inadequate rating overall (while partners give ratings of adequate to strong, country donors give ratings of inadequate to weak on the questions in this key performance indicator). However, this finding must also be discussed in light of the specific country contexts in which UNICEF operates.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> In the case of emergencies and fragile states, the possibilities for using country systems are quite different than when UNICEF operates in countries that are more stable and have stronger institutions.

As illustrated in the chart below, out of the 18 key performance indicators assessed by MOPAN in 2009 through a survey of perceptions, UNICEF received strong ratings on three, adequate ratings on fourteen, and an inadequate rating on only one indicator, based on the total mean scores. MOPAN members in the field view UNICEF's performance less favourably than donors at headquarters and national partners. There are no notable differences in the performance of UNICEF in DAO countries.

### Performance across all indicators (mean scores, all respondents)



## Strategic Management

### UNICEF's Strategic Management

- ~ High ratings for its organisational strategy based on a clear mandate and focus on results at the country level
- ~ Also recognised for its strategic focus in relevant thematic areas

**UNICEF is perceived to be strong in integrating a results focus in its Country Program Documents.** Its focus on results in country programming is rated strongly by its national partners, based on their perceptions of the quality of results frameworks. MOPAN members are more modest in their assessment, giving UNICEF scores that reflect adequate performance.

**UNICEF's strategy is perceived to be based on a clear mandate, which is seen as a strength in terms of its institutional focus on results.**

MOPAN members at headquarters rate UNICEF's performance as particularly strong for having an organisation-wide strategy based on a clear mandate. In their responses to the open-ended question about UNICEF's key strengths, respondents most often highlight UNICEF's mandate, referring to its clarity, strength, and focus on children. The comments also point to a challenge that UNICEF faces to implement that mandate with a greater focus on upstream work (strategic level) rather than hands-on implementation. On other aspects of organisational results orientation, e.g., the quality of agency-wide results frameworks and ensuring the application of results management across the organisation, UNICEF receives only an adequate rating from donors.

*"Clear and precise mandate for the promotion of children's welfare is the greatest strength of UNICEF since it allows UNICEF to focus its organisational capacities on specific goals and targets among various development issues.+(Donor at country level)"*

**UNICEF is recognised for having a strong or adequate strategic focus in thematic areas that have been identified in its Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP).** For MOPAN members in country and for national partners, UNICEF's greatest strength in thematic priorities is its focus on human rights-based approach to programming.<sup>7</sup> From the perspective of the donors at headquarters, its focus on emergency response/humanitarian action is considered its greatest strength (out of the 36 micro-indicators assessed by this group).

UNICEF's integration of HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment is rated strongly by all groups. It is rated adequately for its focus on good governance.

For its focus on gender equality, UNICEF receives strong ratings from its partners and from donors at the country level. However, for donors at headquarters, its performance is only adequate in this area.

**UNICEF is seen to be adequate in its ability to provide direction for results.** It is rated strongly for its partner-focused culture and for making key documents accessible to the public. It is seen to be adequate in the results focus of its institutional culture and in the leadership shown by its senior management on results management.

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<sup>7</sup> Rated highest out of the 46 MIs assessed by country donors, and highest out of the 44 MIs assessed by partners.

## UNICEF's Operational Management

- ~ High ratings: Delegating decision making to the country level
- ~ Mixed ratings: Financial accountability and aid allocation decisions

## Operational Management

**UNICEF's greatest strength overall is perceived to be its delegation of decision-making authority to country offices.** This is its greatest strength out of all key performance areas considered in this assessment, receiving strong ratings from both national partners and MOPAN members. UNICEF's country offices are considered strong in their ability to manage locally and to propose funding for new areas of cooperation within an established budget cap.

**UNICEF is seen to perform strongly in terms of its audit practices, but is viewed less positively by MOPAN members at the country level for other areas of financial accountability.** UNICEF receives a positive assessment of its audit requirements and practices at both the corporate and project level. Donors at headquarters give a high rating to this key performance area. Donors at headquarters also give strong or adequate ratings for UNICEF implementation of a policy addressing institutional corruption and its implementation of risk management strategies. MOPAN members in-country are more critical on these two criteria. There are mixed opinions about whether UNICEF ensures timely action when irregularities are identified. However, these donor respondents' awareness of UNICEF practices in this area is also limited.

**In the area of human resource management, UNICEF is viewed positively for its practices in deploying international staff at the country level.** Donors at headquarters rate UNICEF adequately on its transparent recruitment and promotion of staff based upon merit.

**At the country level, UNICEF is perceived to be strong in its performance-oriented programming practices. MOPAN members at headquarters see a limitation in this area.** In UNICEF's efforts in performance-oriented programming at the country level, it is rated strongly for establishing targets that enable monitoring of project implementation. Donors at headquarters, however, see the lack of impact analysis prior to approval of new initiatives (which they rate as inadequate) as a limitation in UNICEF's programming process.

**UNICEF is perceived to adequately use performance information.** It is rated strongly by partners and adequately by donors for its use of information for planning new areas of cooperation at the country level. Donors at country level indicate that UNICEF performs inadequately in actively managing less effective activities from the previous programming cycle. Partners, however, provide a rating of adequate on this point. At the corporate level, donors at headquarters provide an adequate rating for how UNICEF uses performance information to revise corporate policies. UNICEF is also seen by respondent groups to adequately track implementation of evaluation recommendations reported to the Board.

**While UNICEF is perceived to be strong in allocating core budget resources according to its criteria, it may need to publish more broadly these allocation criteria.** When asked whether or not UNICEF published its criteria for allocating core budget resources, HQ donors and partners in country gave the organisation an adequate rating, while country donors gave it a weak rating (although a large proportion of country donors responded 'don't know' to this question). Those who perceive the organisation publishes its criteria, however, believe strongly that it allocates its resources according to the criteria. This may mean that more can be done by both MOPAN HQ and by UNICEF to increase awareness.

## UNICEF's Relationship Management

~ High ratings: Contributions to policy dialogue

~ Low ratings: Use of country systems for procedures such as procurement, audit, financial reporting

## Relationship Management

**UNICEF's contribution to policy dialogue in favour of children's rights is highly valued.** Policy advocacy is at the heart of UNICEF's mandate and it is recognised for its contributions in this area with an overall rating of strong. Its partnerships with national governments (often noted often as a strength in responses to the open-ended question on the key strengths of UNICEF), contributes to UNICEF's positive ratings in this area.

*"...its good relationship with national counterparts and its influence with them in favour of the rights of the child...It also maintains good relations with the Congress of the Republic, which permits it to influence, and provide, technical assistance toward legislation on childhood and young people in the country...+ (UNICEF partner)"*

**UNICEF is rated as inadequate overall in its use of country systems. It is rated adequate by the country partners and inadequate by the country donors.<sup>8</sup>** UNICEF receives low ratings on five of the six criteria assessed in this area. It is rated as inadequate overall in its use of national systems and procedures, including financial reporting procedures, auditing procedures, procurement systems and budget execution procedures, in its projects and programs. The only exception is UNICEF's role in encouraging mutual accountability assessment of Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) commitments, where partners rate its performance as strong and donors as inadequate. There is a low level of awareness on this issue, however, with large percentages of both country donors and partners answering "don't know" to these questions.

It is important to note that in some of the contexts in which UNICEF works the use of country systems may not be feasible or appropriate.

**UNICEF is rated as adequate in terms of the extent to which its procedures take into account local conditions and capacities, but there are some concerns from donors in this area.** Although partners provide strong or adequate ratings on the criteria assessed, donors at country level judge UNICEF to perform inadequately in adjusting the implementation of projects as learning occurs or in adjusting the overall country portfolio in response to changing circumstance. According to donors, UNICEF also does poorly in terms of the efficiency of its procedures: the length of time spent on procedures is seen by donors in-country to have negative effects on project implementation. Partners rate as strong, and donors as adequate, UNICEF's use of procedures that can be easily understood and followed by direct partners.

**UNICEF is also perceived to adequately harmonise procedures, although it does not appear to meet donor expectations on all aspects.** Donors in-country provide an adequate rating on most of the criteria, but they give an inadequate rating for UNICEF's coordination in the delivery of technical assistance to national partners. Overall, UNICEF is rated as strong for its participation in program-based approaches and adequate for its participation in joint missions. Partners are more positive than donors about UNICEF's efforts to harmonise procedures. The comments provided by 18% of respondents to the open-ended question on key areas for improvement

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<sup>8</sup> "Use of country systems" refers to UNICEF's use of government procurement systems and financial systems (including budget execution procedures, financial reporting procedures, auditing procedures and procedures for recording expected disbursements in national budgets).

indicate that UNICEF may need to strengthen its coordination with other UN agencies.

*UNICEF should be more geared towards working together with other UN organisations as one UN.+(Donor at country level)*

**UNICEF is rated adequately for its support for national plans and priorities.** Respondents at the country level rated UNICEF as adequate in its support for funding proposals designed and developed by the national government or direct partners. They also give an adequate rating to UNICEF's application of conditionality that corresponds to national government goals and benchmarks.

## Knowledge Management

### UNICEF's Knowledge Management

~ High rating:  
Independent evaluation office as part of UNICEF's monitoring of external results

**UNICEF's monitoring of external results is supported by the benefit of having an independent evaluation office.** Headquarter donor respondents also indicate that UNICEF is doing adequately in ensuring that a sufficient proportion of completed projects/programs are subject to independent evaluation. At the country level, partners rate UNICEF highly for involving beneficiaries in monitoring and evaluation functions. MOPAN members, on the other hand, rate UNICEF inadequately on this criterion.

**UNICEF receives adequate ratings from donors at headquarters for its presentation of performance information on effectiveness.** Slightly more than half of MOPAN members at headquarters agree that UNICEF uses performance information to report on its effectiveness, including outcomes achieved. Donors also consider that UNICEF is adequately reporting to the Executive Board on the performance in relation to its commitment to Paris Declaration principles.

**UNICEF is rated as adequate in its dissemination of lessons learned.** UNICEF receives an adequate rating for providing opportunities at all levels of the organisation to share lessons from practical experience. It is also considered to be adequate in identifying and disseminating lessons learned from performance information.



## Key Strengths and Areas for Improvement

The strengths and areas for improvement, based on the findings of the MOPAN Common Approach, provide a basis for discussion between MOPAN members, UNICEF, and its partners. In many cases, there are divergent views on UNICEF's performance. The full list of issues for discussion can be found in the Conclusion section of the report.

### Key Strengths

UNICEF's key strengths are based on the indicators that are rated as strong by more than one respondent group or that received a rating of strong overall. These include:

- **Delegating decision making:** UNICEF's decentralised operation is considered to be a key strength by both MOPAN members at country level and partners.
- **Managing human resources:** MOPAN members at country level are confident that UNICEF keeps deployed international staff in country offices long enough to maintain effective partnerships at the country level. National partners tend to agree and also rate UNICEF's performance as strong in this area.
- **Financial accountability:** MOPAN members at headquarters are particularly confident about its internal audit mechanisms, the extent to which its corporate audits adhere to international standards, and its policy addressing corruption within the organisation (Their colleagues at the country level are more critical on this last point). For national partners, UNICEF's strength lies in its external audit practices for projects and programs and the way it handles irregularities at the country level.
- **Contributing to policy dialogue:** MOPAN members at headquarters and national partners recognise that UNICEF respects the views of its partners and provides valuable inputs to policy dialogue.
- **Results focus in its Country Program Documents:** Partners recognise UNICEF for having a results-focused country programming approach and consider this area to be among UNICEF's key strengths.
- **Focus on thematic priorities:** MOPAN members and partners recognise UNICEF for its focus on human rights-based approach to programming, emergency action/humanitarian response, and HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment. Its focus on good governance is considered adequate. In its focus on gender equality, UNICEF receives strong ratings from partners and country donors but only adequate ratings from donors at headquarters. These thematic priorities are either focus areas or cross-cutting strategies articulated in the MTSP.
- **Monitoring external results:** Donors at headquarters see the independence of UNICEF's evaluation office as a key strength. Partners give UNICEF strong ratings for involving key clients and beneficiaries in monitoring and evaluation functions.

## Key Areas for Improvement

The key area for improvement for UNICEF is drawn from those indicators rated as inadequate by more than one respondent group or where they have received an overall rating of inadequate:

- **Its use of country systems:** MOPAN members at country level are concerned about UNICEF's use of national financial reporting procedures, auditing procedures, procurement systems, and national budget execution procedures in its projects and programs. National partners, on the other hand, give either an adequate or strong rating to all questions in this key performance indicator. The differences in perceptions on this indicator may point to the need for UNICEF to better inform donors at country level. UNICEF's ability to improve its use of country systems may depend on the particular country contexts in which it operates.

## Conclusion

UNICEF is recognised by respondents for having a well-defined and incontestable mandate, positive relationships with government partners, and operational capacity. Respondents indicate that UNICEF is able to get things done on the ground. In the MOPAN Common Approach, UNICEF is perceived to perform strongly on indicators of organisational practices and behaviours that have important repercussions at the country level: delegation of decision-making, results focus of country programming, contributions to policy dialogue. At the same time, respondents comment on a tension that is perceived between UNICEF's strong track record as an implementer and moving towards a more strategic or 'upstream' role of advocating norms and policies.

UNICEF is seen to do adequately in implementing several aspects of the aid effectiveness agenda, including the flexibility of its procedures, the transparency of its aid allocation decisions, and harmonisation of procedures. It is seen to be performing inadequately in its use of country systems (such as national budget execution procedures, national procurement systems, national financial reporting procedures and national auditing procedures). However, the findings on use of country systems should be discussed in light of the realities in which UNICEF works, which range from countries with mature institutions and good governance structures to countries immersed in varying degrees of conflict and with weak national systems.

The following key strengths and areas for improvement provide a basis for discussion between MOPAN members, UNICEF and its national partners.

### Strengths:

UNICEF's key strengths are based on the indicators that are rated as 'strong' by more than one respondent group or that received a rating of 'strong' overall. These include:

- **Delegating decision making:** UNICEF's decentralised operation is considered to be a key strength by both MOPAN members at country level and partners.
- **Managing human resources:** MOPAN members at country level are confident that UNICEF keeps deployed international staff in country offices long enough to maintain effective partnerships at the country level. National partners tend to agree and also rate UNICEF's performance as strong in this area.
- **Financial accountability:** MOPAN members at headquarters are particularly confident about its internal audit mechanisms, the extent to which its corporate audits adhere to international standards, and its policy addressing corruption within the organisation. (Their colleagues at the country level are more critical on this last point). For national partners, UNICEF's strength lies in its external audit practices for projects and programs and the way it handles irregularities at the country level.
- **Contributing to policy dialogue:** MOPAN members at headquarters and national partners recognise that UNICEF respects the views of its partners and provides valuable inputs to policy dialogue.
- **Results focus in its Country Program Documents:** partners recognise UNICEF for having a results-focused country programming approach and consider this area to be among UNICEF's key strengths.
- **Focus on thematic priorities:** MOPAN members and partners recognise UNICEF for its focus on human rights-based approach to programming, emergency action/humanitarian response, and HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment. Respondents at country level give UNICEF strong ratings for its focus on gender equality, but donors at headquarters rate it only as adequate. These thematic priorities are either focus areas or cross-cutting strategies articulated in the MTSP.

- **Monitoring external results:** Donors at headquarters see a strength in the independence of UNICEF's evaluation office. Partners give UNICEF strong ratings for involving clients and beneficiaries in monitoring and evaluation functions.

The table below reflects those key performance indicators, or micro-indicators, that receive the highest ratings (strong or better) from each of the respondent groups.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 0.1 UNICEF's Greatest Strengths, by Respondent Group \***

MOPAN members at country level	MOPAN members at headquarters	UNICEF partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing human resources</li> <li>• Delegating decision making</li> <li>• Significant strategic focus on human rights-based approaches to development. (Focus on thematic priorities)</li> <li>• Significant strategic focus on emergency response / humanitarian action. (Focus on thematic priorities)</li> <li>• Significant strategic focus on HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment. (Focus on thematic priorities)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial accountability</li> <li>• Contributing to policy dialogue</li> <li>• Significant strategic focus on emergency response / humanitarian action. (Focus on thematic priorities)</li> <li>• Organisation-wide strategy/strategies are based on a clear mandate. (Corporate focus on results)</li> <li>• Significant strategic focus on human rights-based approaches to development. (Focus on thematic priorities)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sets targets to enable monitoring of program implementation. (Performance-oriented programming)</li> <li>• Country focus on results</li> <li>• Monitoring external results</li> <li>• Delegating decision making</li> <li>• Harmonising procedures</li> </ul>

\*Only the five highest-rated KPIs or Micro-Indicators items are listed.

## Areas for improvement

The key area for improvement for UNICEF is based on indicators that are rated as **inadequate** by more than one respondent group or that received an overall rating of **inadequate**.

- **Its use of country systems where feasible and appropriate:** MOPAN members at country level are concerned about UNICEF's use of national financial reporting procedures, auditing procedures, procurement systems and national budget execution procedures in its projects and programs. National partners, on the other hand, give either an adequate or strong rating to all questions in this key performance indicator. The differences in perceptions on this indicator may point to the need for UNICEF to better inform donors at country level. It is important to note that UNICEF's ability to improve its use of country systems may depend on the particular country contexts in which it operates.

<sup>9</sup> Please see Appendix III in order to see all of the items that might have been rated as strong by any of the respondent groups.

**Figure 0.2 UNICEF Areas for Improvement, by Respondent Group\***

MOPAN members at country level	MOPAN members at headquarters	UNICEF partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aid allocation decisions</li> <li>• Using country systems</li> <li>• Monitoring external results</li> <li>• Adjusting procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subjects new initiatives to impact analysis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>

\*Only lowest rated KPIs or Micro-Indicators items which are rated as ~~inadequate~~ are listed.