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**Internal Oversight Service**  
**Evaluation Section**

## **Field Office Evaluations: A report consolidating the results of evaluations**

**Undertaken by the Internal Oversight Service**  
**November 2003-October 2004**

The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area of its authorities, or concerning its frontiers or boundaries.

## Purpose and Background

1. As part of the reform process in UNESCO, a new field structure was established in mid-2001 consisting of Regional Bureaux, Cluster Offices and National Offices. Some National Offices were closed and stronger multi-sectoral Cluster Offices were established supported by a few mono-sectoral Regional Bureaux. The overall objectives of decentralization were to strengthen the field presence in Member States and to improve efficiency, effectiveness and impact of UNESCO programme delivery to Member States.
2. The Director-General is committed to report to the Executive Board at the beginning of 2005 on the functioning of this structure and to show in particular how it is helping UNESCO to become more efficient and effective in delivering its programmes.
3. The Executive Board has also requested a comprehensive evaluation of the activities and results of all decentralized bodies and to see the outcome of evaluating Field Offices using criteria approved by Executive Board.
4. Against this backdrop, IOS have undertaken field office evaluations with the following objectives:
  - i. To assess the effective functioning of the decentralization strategy
  - ii. To assess the performance of each field office that was evaluated
5. The results of the evaluations are intended:
  - i. To provide inputs to the comprehensive review on the overall decentralization structure coordinated by the Deputy Director General. The results of this comprehensive review will form the basis for the report of the Director-General to the Executive Board at the beginning of 2005.
  - ii. To provide inputs to the Evaluation Report on the Activities and Results of Decentralized Bodies which will be presented to the Executive Board 172<sup>nd</sup> Session. Such a report is prepared each biennium. In September 2003, IOS prepared a report on the results of evaluation of 10 field offices which were undertaken in 2003. This report was presented by the Director-General to the Executive Board at its 167<sup>th</sup> session (167EX/14). The report covering the results of evaluations undertaken in 2004 and 2005 will be prepared for the 172<sup>nd</sup> session.

## Scope

6. The field office evaluations were not intended as comprehensive programme evaluations in the countries/offices visited. The evaluations do not seek to assess individual programmes and activities, but do provide an assessment with an institutional and strategic focus. The aim is to assess how field offices are functioning and fit into the Organization's overall structure rather than assessing individual activities and results achieved. This is in line with the evaluation criteria defined by the board.

### Field Office Evaluation Criteria Approved by The Executive Board

- Strategic Planning
- Integration into the United Nations System and leadership
- Relations with stakeholders and beneficiaries
- Decentralized Network Structure
- Financial and Human Resources
- Programme results

7. The 2003 field evaluations covered 10 field offices. The offices selected for this initial round represented all types of field offices (Regional Bureaux, Cluster Offices with regional support functions, pure Cluster Offices, National Offices) from four regions.

8. The second round of field evaluations (November 2003-October 2004) covered 6 Clusters. For each cluster, the evaluation covered the Cluster Office and several Member States within the Cluster where there is no UNESCO Office or where the UNESCO Office had been closed as part of the implementation of the

existing decentralization strategy. Where there was a National Office within these clusters, IOS also evaluated the National Offices. By doing so, the evaluation was able to assess the functioning of the overall decentralization structure and its impact on the Member States. In total 10 field offices<sup>1</sup>: 3 Member States with closed offices<sup>2</sup> and 4 Member States<sup>3</sup> without a UNESCO office were evaluated.

### **Actions taken by management following 2003 field office evaluations**

9.
  - i. **Establishment of Decentralization Task Force**

The findings that emerged from the 2003 round of field office evaluations, which were presented to the Executive Board in September 2003 (167EX/14) identified “high-level” issues that needed to be addressed by management as a prerequisite to securing the effective functioning of decentralized bodies. The issues were presented and discussed in the College of ADGs in March 2003 and subsequently a Senior Management Task Force on Delegation and Decentralization was established by the Director-General to initiate follow-up actions. The progress of the Task Force were discussed in the Directorate in June 2003 and again in July 2003 following discussion in a retreat of all heads of field offices. The Executive Board have been informed of the progress made in implementing the agreed follow-up actions (169 EX/6).
  - ii. **Global meeting**

This three day meeting on 25-28 March 2004 was attended by 130 senior managers from HQ and field locations. The objective was “to reach a common understanding on the future profile of UNESCO and on the reform process”. There were five specific themes for the meeting:

    - To explore the possible “profile of action” which would respond to the challenges and opportunities that UNESCO may face in the coming years
    - To determine measures to strengthen decentralization
    - To discuss the new Programme Management Cycle
    - To develop ideas for future UNESCO staffing
    - To share good practices.

No report on the outcome of the Global Meeting has been released.
  - iii. **Further work by the Decentralization Task Force.**

Subsequently working groups were established comprising of field and HQ managers. Each working group was assigned to discuss and make recommendations on specific issues to strengthen decentralization. The work of the Decentralization Task Force is still continuing at the time this report is prepared.

### **Methods and Approaches**

10. The evaluations were undertaken using the following methods and approaches:
  - i. Collection and review of background material in Headquarters
  - ii. Discussions with Headquarters staff
  - iii. Collection and review of material in the field
  - iv. Discussions with Field staff, other UN agency representatives, National Commission staff, donors, government officials, and other programme partners. In total over 350 external parties were interviewed during the evaluations in 15 Member States. This included many Government Ministers, UN Resident Coordinators in each of these Member States, Representatives/heads of other UN agencies (UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, etc) and Representatives of major donor countries.
  - v. Project visits in the field.
  - vi. Presentation of the preliminary findings to the Field Offices.

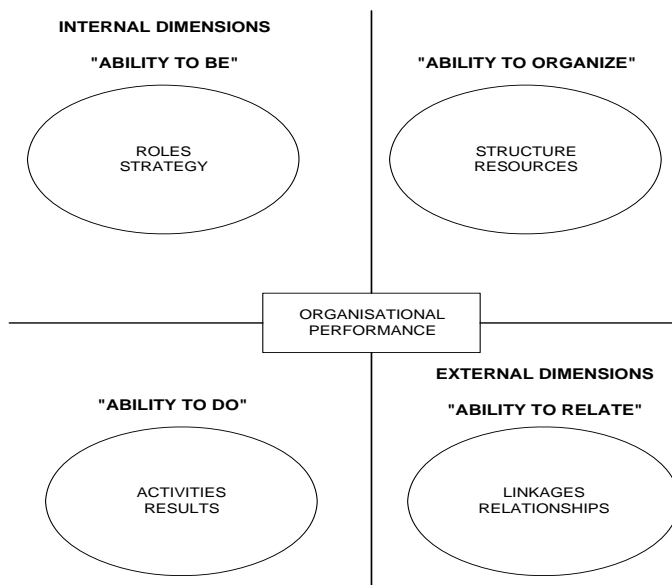
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<sup>1</sup> Windhoek, Cairo, Beijing, Phnom Penh, Hanoi, Bangkok, Harare, Maputo, Teheran, Islamabad.

<sup>2</sup> South Africa, Angola, Zambia.

<sup>3</sup> Yemen, Sudan, Mongolia, Laos.

11. The evaluations are organized using an analytical model for assessing organizational capacity and performance. The model takes as a point of departure that UNESCO field offices need four key abilities to function effectively under the decentralization strategy. In other words, these four abilities determine how UNESCO is perceived, its performance and sustainability. The four abilities and the eight elements can be summarized as follows:



These four abilities cover all field office evaluation criteria approved by the Executive Board.

12. Following this model, the report is also structured as follows:
- i. Ability to be: Roles and Strategy consist of: governance, leadership, identity
  - ii. Ability to organise: Structures and Resources consist of: organization structure, human, financial resources, systems
  - iii. Ability to do: Activities and Results consist of: relevance, effectiveness, viability
  - iv. Ability to relate: Linkages and Relationships consist of: standing, linkages and responsiveness

#### **A. Roles and Strategy**

13. This chapter covers the following:
- To what extent the Field Offices have a clear identity, objectives and mandates
  - What are the most prominent roles played by UNESCO
  - To what extent does the global strategic planning process involve Member States and the field offices – supporting a decentralized country driven set of priorities

## UNESCO's roles in delivering programme to Member States

### Findings

14. The specialised agencies of the UN were established as focal points for intergovernmental deliberations and negotiations on common international issues in their respective areas. Member States designed them for the purpose of collecting and disseminating information linked to the setting of international standards and rules. Increasingly, they came to be seen as “centres of excellence”, initiating and organizing international research efforts and campaigns. As such, they have also been important sources of information and advice for developing countries. This has often been referred to as the normative function that is, providing an instrument for agreement on norms, standards and recommendations for the furthering of the common good.

15. The specialised agencies have, however, increasingly become involved in the execution of technical assistance projects in developing countries and this can be described as their operational function. There has been debate as to whether the specialised agencies have come to devote too much of their work to technical assistance and other operational activities, to the detriment of other important aspects of their mandates.

16. IOS analysed UNESCO's roles during the field office evaluations using the following analytical categories:

- i. Laboratory of ideas  
Whereby UNESCO becomes engaged in or supports applied research and innovative/pilot projects.
- ii. Clearing house for information  
Whereby UNESCO collects and disseminates information, for example on good practice in capacity development or experiences curriculum development, organises this in databases, libraries, on CD-ROMs, etc.
- iii. Policy development  
Whereby UNESCO assists Member States in preparing educational or cultural policies or assists in setting norms and standards.
- iv. Advocacy  
Whereby UNESCO proactively tries to promote a policy or practice.
- v. Capacity development  
Whereby UNESCO helps to build the capacity among other organizations to perform specific tasks, for example to develop teaching material, to change curriculum, to produce and broadcast radio programmes.
- vi. Catalyst for development cooperation  
Whereby UNESCO starts and coordinates an initiative shared and supported by several organizations at country or regional level.
- vii. Financial and technical operations support  
Whereby UNESCO provides technical expertise, administrative capacities and/or financial support for the implementation of projects.

17. IOS observed the following examples which illustrate different roles played by UNESCO field offices.

### Laboratory of Ideas

18. *A Virtual Institute for Higher Education:* UNESCO Harare in collaboration with the Nigerian University Commission has created a Virtual Institute for Higher Education in Africa (VIHEAF). VIHEAF seek to build and strengthen capacity of teachers and other personnel in educational institutions in sub-Saharan Africa. Training courses for teachers on HIV/AIDS and modern methods of teaching and learning have also been provided.

### Catalyst for Development Cooperation

19. Telecenters in Mozambique: Mozambique's first two pilot telecentres (providing computers, e-mail, CD rom, printing, photo copies, training, library, fax, telephone, etc. to local communities) were established in Manhica and Namaacha districts of Maputo in 1999, in a project coordinated by the Eduardo Mondlane University Informatics Centre (CIUM) with support from IDRC and UNESCO. CIUM has been at the forefront of activities in the field of ICTs in Mozambique focusing on rural and semi-rural areas. The initiative has been managed from the UNESCO office through an officer who worked on the project on a regular basis and maintained contact with UNESCO in Paris.

20. The objective for the project was *"to build, through appropriate training activities over the first two years of the Multipurpose Community Telecentres (MCTs), an innovative community of core users and a critical level of understanding and application of information and communication processes in development"*.

21. An evaluation on the project concluded that *"the telecentres are fulfilling their principal objective of taking ICTs to the most disadvantaged communities... They are becoming community centres where members of the community have access to ICT and information, and they are in this sense contributing to local development. The young continue to take the lead in using the available technologies. The information most in demand is related to health, education and national and local news and events, with women giving additional priority to employment related materials"*. The future plan is to move from pilots to broader country coverage.

22. In February 2002, CIUM also signed a contract with UNESCO to manage the installation of community radio stations in the existing telecentres in Maputo Province, thus helping to convert them into Community Media Centers. The essential output of this projects is that two pilot CCMs are successfully up and running, the main project activities are implemented, the radios are making an impact at local level and valuable lessons are being learned.

### Clearing House of Information

23. The following databases are functioning in Harare:

- HIV/AIDS and education in Harare.
- Higher Education Open and Distance Learning Knowledge Base.
- Directory on Opportunities for Postgraduate studies and research.
- Work on quality assurance, network of researchers.

### Advocacy and Rights Based Approach

24. It seems that UNESCO has a relatively low profile in advocacy – actively promoting and defending a rights based approach to development. Zimbabwe is an interesting example. The UN is one of few development partners maintaining relations with the Zimbabwean Government while bilateral donors have stopped all direct support to the Government. UNDP confirmed that although activities of the UN country team are anchored in a rights-based approach to development, some agencies have not consciously incorporated this dimension in their work, viewing the promotion of human rights being outside their mandate. UN agencies differed in their perception of the role of the UN at country level in the areas of reporting, monitoring and addressing human rights issues.

25. UNICEF, UNFPA and others have developed tools and methodologies for rights based programming, while other as for instance UNESCO has not. Organisations like UNDP, ILO and UNESCO seem also to have found it more difficult to promote civic and political rights, in part because of the sensitivity associated with these concepts in the current political environment. UNESCO was for instance obliged to suspend a pilot project funded by the Netherlands Government in mainstreaming human rights and democracy in the education system (The Citizen Education Project). The Netherlands Embassy found UNESCO to be too passive in dealing with the Government, while UNDP commended UNESCO for trying to introduce the new citizen project – even if in the end political realities had to be accepted.

### UNESCO's most prominent roles

26. IOS used two approaches in analyzing UNESCO's most prominent roles: through mapping of the existing methods of implementing activities by the offices and through questionnaires/discussions with field

office staff (they were asked to identify the prominent roles that the office plays without reference to any particular projects).

27. As already reported in 167EX/14, the roles that UNESCO should perform remains the most fundamental issue that needs to be clarified. The evaluations showed that each of the offices plays a broad range of roles i.e. the programme delivery mechanisms cover all of the seven roles mentioned above. Generally, there is no focus as to what priority role(s) UNESCO should play and this affects many other decentralization issues such as human resources and funding requirements.

28. Interviews with the field staff clearly showed that they are not clear on what roles that the Office should play. Consensus among stakeholders on UNESCO's main role is not strong due to the wide-ranging nature of UNESCO's programming – from policy level advocacy to managing small-scale projects in a single community, as well as UNESCO's limited financing capacity. Several Ministers interviewed emphasized the need for UNESCO to give priority to high level policy advice and capacity building together with a few demonstration projects. Generally, they urged UNESCO to have fewer, more focused and more strategic activities.

29. IOS analysed the budget allocated for each role and identified a number of roles which received more funds than the others. There is no evidence to suggest that this was done strategically i.e. when the cluster strategies or work plans were established there was no directed focus on priorities or activities on a few major roles. Priorities were defined without describing what types of programme delivery mechanisms (which basically define the roles) will be used. Examples of cluster priorities were: "Supporting quality Education for All" and "Addressing HIV/AIDS issues". But there was no deliberation as to what how they will be delivered taking into consideration the existing capacity and available resources.

30. In reviewing the resources allocated by roles, it was clear that there is no consistency even in roles that UNESCO played in Member States within one cluster. In some Member States, capacity building and policy development are the dominant roles. In others, policy development, advocacy and clearing house activities dominate. While in others, the role of providing financial support (project implementer) is dominant. It should be noted that in analyzing the roles IOS found that where an office's dominant role was described (by the offices themselves) as normative (e.g. policy development or clearing house), in reality UNESCO's real contribution is actually in the provision of funds. In many cases, the offices hired consultants to provide the support and there was no intellectual contribution provided by the office. In other agencies, this is done through cash assistance to government where the agency provides the funds and the government administers/manages the contract with the support of consultants. The conclusion from reviewing the roles played by the offices is that there are no clear dominant roles played by UNESCO in the field and that UNESCO is involved in all seven roles without strategic direction.

#### Why does this happen

31. i. **Lack of clear direction from Headquarters**

The C/4 document specifies the above 7 roles as the roles that UNESCO should play. This is a very broad range of roles especially considering the limited human and financial resources available. A more focused direction, taking into consideration the human and financial resources required, is needed to assist field offices in strategizing their priorities and their use of resources.

ii. **Lack of a focused country programme**

The planning framework does not encourage and facilitate country or cluster driven programme development. There are centralizing elements working against a bottom-up, country driven planning process. Global policies and priorities have an important role to play even in a decentralized planning approach, but the existing system with global Programmes, Sub-programme, and MLAs defined on a sectoral basis in HQ seems to work against a country focused holistic programme approach. HQ ends up micro-managing and approving individual activities and does not review and approve the direction of a country programme.

As reported in 167EX/14, the existing sectoral planning process in which HQ defines the main structure of the programme framework and budget allocation to the field up to MLA level, leads to offices trying to “fit in” their activities within these MLAs. This, coupled with the small amount of decentralized funds and the aim to meet the needs of Member States, resulted in a widespread of allocation of the resources to a very high number of activities (example: A cluster office has 63 Education activities with a budget of only \$900,000. Of this, 40 activities or 63% of these activities has budget of no more than \$5,000 and only 11 activities have a budget exceeding \$10,000). As a result small sums of money were allocated to each activity and the offices develop their activities based on the available funds. For example, to serve 5 Member States with an activity which only has a \$5,000 budget, the cluster office was not left with many options and the most feasible solution was to conduct a meeting/training attended by several participants from all 5 Member States even though this may not necessarily be the most effective programme delivery mechanism for the objectives intended. This means that the small amount of funds available becomes one of the main factors that dictate the programme delivery mechanism used and not the roles that UNESCO should play.

iii. **Lack of staff capacity**

The overall staffing situation in the field, in terms of number of staff, has improved since IOS’s 2003 field office evaluations. More cluster offices have at least one programme specialist (regardless of the contractual type) for each sector. For example, Windhoek had specialists in all sectors at the time of the evaluation; Cairo, Teheran and Beijing had specialist in four sectors. However, excluding the Heads of Offices, less than 10% of staff employed by the offices were on P4 or P5 fixed term posts. The rest are of lower grade and temporary contracted personnel (SSAs, service contracts, consultant contracts, volunteers or interns). Most government officials, National Commissions and UN agencies interviewed by IOS confirmed that there is an insufficient critical mass of expertise in UNESCO offices and there is concern that UNESCO was not able to attract sufficiently senior specialists to be able to deal with stakeholders. Therefore, the ability of the offices to perform advocacy, policy development or other normative functions is limited. This, coupled with inadequate financial resources, leads to offices implementing activities that they can afford which in some cases involve performing more financial support roles which do not require seniority or specific expertise.

iv. **Donor wishes**

Generally, donors’ preference is to fund projects with high visibility or projects with direct impacts (for example, building of schools, funding of special events). This is another factor that drives UNESCO more into operational functions rather than normative.

What are the consequences

32. i. **Increased involvement in operational support activities than normative functions.**

The activities implemented by offices show that they are increasingly becoming involved in the execution of technical assistance projects which can be described as an operational function, as opposed to the normative functions of a specialized agency. Devoting too much resource on operational functions as opposed to normative functions is not fully in-line with the mandate of UNESCO as a specialized agency.

ii. **Confusion among programme partners on UNESCO’s roles**

It is widely acknowledged that UNESCO is not a funding agency with a large budget. However, because of the inconsistency in the roles played and the fact that many of activities actually involve the provision of funds, partners are calling for more human and financial resources, most often by reference to the need for more projects rather than the normative dimension. This further diverted UNESCO roles.



- iii. **Difficulty in identifying the skill set required in staff**  
 Given that there is no focus on the roles that UNESCO should play and the large number of small activities supported by UNESCO, staff are often not technically competent to provide all of the support required. In all offices, sub-contracted consultants or contractors are used heavily to do the work (e.g. the Cairo Office established 550 contracts during 2002-2003). Therefore, in many cases, UNESCO staff become administrators and managers rather than advisers or technical experts. Programme specialists interviewed by IOS admitted that they spend a large part of their time managing contractors/consultants. An HRM/IOS initiative to undertake a skill gap assessment was constrained by the lack of focus in the roles that UNESCO plays.
- iv. **Constraint in being at the cutting edge of knowledge as an intellectual organization**  
 Given that UNESCO plays such a broad set of roles, different types of skills sets are required which means that more staff or consultants are required to implement the activities. However, as discussed in other parts of this report, the limited funding only allow the organization to establish entry level posts, many even with temporary contracts (without fixed term posts). Similarly, with a small budget for each activity and the lower standard rates that UNESCO offers for consultants it is difficult for UNESCO to attract high level consultants to deliver high quality outputs. UNESCO is often not able to afford the more qualified consultants that are needed to put it at the cutting edge in terms of knowledge as it should be as a specialized agency. Intellectual leadership is important to partners and fundamental to UNESCO's comparative advantage. Possible dilution of UNESCO's technical leadership is consequently very serious.

## **B. Programme planning**

### Findings – Achievements

- 33. i. **Implementation of a new planning process**  
 Following 167EX/14 and the work of the decentralization task force established by the Director-General, a new programme management cycle was introduced for 33 C/5 which aims to provide for a better involvement of cluster offices and stakeholders at the country level and aims to increase the decentralization of programme activities. Following this new planning process, cluster consultations, involving representatives of Member States, should be conducted in all clusters preceding regional consultation meetings as the basis for developing field office strategic plans. This is one of the major innovations of this new process. The strategic plans developed by field offices are conceived as the link between the global strategies and expected results presented in the C/5 document and the actual needs/priorities of the Member States.
- ii. **Development of operational plans and work plans based on cluster strategies**  
 The strategic plans of the cluster/national offices present the strategies to be pursued and the results to be attained at cluster/national level. They will assist the offices in focusing the direction of its operational and work plans. This means that the activities implemented by the offices are expected to be relevant to the needs and priorities of the Member States.
- iii. **Improved level of decentralization of funds to the field**  
 In the earlier C/5s, decentralization of funds was done at the MLA level. In the new planning process for 33 C/5, the decentralization of the regular programme budget by each HQ sector which is presented in a Resource Allocation Matrix (RAM) is done at the sub-programme level giving more flexibility to offices in designing their activities.

## Findings – Challenges

34. Efforts have been made to strengthen bottom-up planning in the new Programme Management Cycle. The following challenges are presented to show what now needs to be done to make this new process work effectively.

i. **Lack of tools in implementing the new Programme Management Cycle**

While the aim of the new process is to improve the planning process, there are challenges in terms of preparing adequate tools to assist offices and HQ sectors/divisions to implement it. Some examples are presented in the recommendations to follow.

ii. **Tight time schedule in implementing the new Programme Management Cycle which seems to be unrealistic:**

- In November, with a time frame of about one month, the following tasks need to be completed: preparation of Sectoral Strategic Framework (SSF), Resource Allocation Matrix (RAM) proposals by the ADGs (after consultation with HQ directors and Heads of field offices), followed by the consolidation of the proposals by BSP, the review by the College of ADGs and the final approval by the DG.
- In January, with a time frame of about one month, the following tasks need to be completed: review of the HQ divisions and field offices strategic plans by Programme Review Committees (PRC) followed by the aggregation and analysis of the plans by BSP and BB, the review by the College of ADGs and the final approval by the DG (including possible final arbitration). Furthermore, the PRC need to review a very large number of plans proposed by all HQ divisions and all field offices.
- In February, with a time frame of about one month, the following tasks need to be completed: development of operational plans, provided that the DG has approved the strategic plans. This is short, given the short period separating the development of the strategic plans and the operational plans and since it seems too early (into the present bienium) to develop true operational plans while the implementation of the current programme and budget is limited.

iii. **Ensuring subsidiarity**

As specified in the DG's Blue Note for preparation of the 33 C/5, in developing their strategic plans, the sectors should "*...fully enact the principle of subsidiarity – according to which programmes or actions that can be designed and implemented effectively at the field level, should not be designed nor implemented by HQ. Regional Bureaux should also develop a strategic plan, with a clear distinction between strategies and results to be pursued at the regional level, and those pertaining, where applicable, to their cluster functions*". The challenge is how to ensure that this is fully complied with. IOS observations in the 2003 round of field office evaluations (167EX/14) and the 2004 round showed that HQ are still managing projects in the field that should and could have been decentralized. Furthermore, there were also cases where the cluster/national offices were not informed about HQ activities. In some cases, the offices were informed by their partners such as the National Commissions.

iv. **Absence of national priorities in the cluster strategy**

This issue was observed by IOS in reviewing cluster strategies developed for the 32 C/5 and should be addressed in the relevant guidelines to be developed for implementing the new Programme Management Cycle. It was observed that the cluster strategy does not delineate between cluster and national priorities. In discussions with IOS, some donors noted that they would like to be able to see the national priorities which they may wish to support. Existence of national priorities for each Member States within a cluster strategy would assist in fundraising efforts.

v. **UNESCO's programme becomes an aggregation of activities of all sectors.**

UNESCO activities are organized and driven by sectors – and not so much by geography or country. There are links between several of the activities, but they are not made explicit in a programme framework with mutually supportive activities. Thus, it is difficult to get a holistic

view of what UNESCO does at country or cluster level. The challenge is how to review an office strategy as a holistic programme comprising of several sectors.

vi. **Follow-up actions and effective communication on results of cluster consultations to stakeholders.**

Discussions with various stakeholders revealed that cluster consultations were well received by participants in fostering a shared vision and commitment to a common set of priorities. However, one shortcoming of the post-consultation period is the absence of (or inadequate number of) concrete initiatives by way of activities within the Member States in response to the priorities identified. They pointed out that follow up on the cluster strategy had been slow and they were not informed which priorities would receive full support and which ones had been rejected by HQ.

vii. **Approval of work plans was not based on cluster strategy.**

In the 32 C/5, cluster priority areas were identified through cluster consultations. However, when the cluster offices submitted their work plans to the sectors, there were many activities which were not approved as proposed and there were activities which were approved and were not in the priority areas but funds were nevertheless decentralized to the offices. This created difficulty for the office in meeting the needs of Member States as specified in the cluster priorities. In some cases, the offices were able to “fit in” the activity in other MLAs (which were defined quite broadly). In some cases, they simply could not meet the priorities established.

Why does this happen

35. i. **Lack of tools to implement the new Programme Management Cycle**

Many of the challenges mentioned above point to the need for tools to assist offices and HQ sectors/divisions in implementing the new planning process. At the time this report is prepared (November 2004), the new planning process has just been started. General guidelines were prepared and distributed by BSP. However, there are more specific tools and guidelines that should be prepared by relevant HQ services such as:

- guidelines for developing cluster/national strategic plans (including the need to include national priorities in the cluster strategic plans)
- guidelines for developing operational plans and the template/format required
- guidelines for developing work plans and the template/format required
- template/format for Resource Allocation Matrix (RAM) to indicate budget allocation from HQ to the field
- template/format for Indicative Utilization of Staffing Resources which should be prepared by each sector.

ii. **Lack of accountability mechanisms**

167EX/14 stated that there was the lack of an accountability mechanism requiring HQ and field offices to report on the achievement of the expected results set out in the approved work plans. The empowerment that comes with the delegation of authority, strengthened by the implementation of the new planning process, should be accompanied by adequate support and a proper accountability mechanism. Similarly, compliance to the established policies/procedures, such as the issue of subsidiarity, should also be monitored through an accountability mechanism. These were found to be lacking.

iii. **Need for more transparent process**

The new Programme Management Cycle establishes the need for field offices, through cluster and regional consultations, to provide inputs to the development of UNESCO’s strategy for the preparation of the preliminary proposals to the Director-General. However, it is still not clear how the inputs from the field are considered. There were concerns raised from the field regarding the exclusion of their inputs for the preparation of the 33 C/5.

- iv. **Field office plans are reviewed by sectoral Programme Review Committees (PRC)**  
The new Programme Management Cycle requires the preparation of a cluster strategy. However, the office strategic plans will be reviewed by a series of Programme Review Committees chaired by the sector ADG concerned in each case. Consideration will therefore be very much of a sectoral basis.
- v. **In the past, lack of strategic tools at cluster/country level**  
In the past most of planning up to the Main Line of Actions (MLAs) level was conducted by HQ and the outcome was not primarily cluster or country specific. Offices defined their activities based on inputs from local partners. As such, UNESCO was missing an important planning tool at an intermediate level – between the broad policy statements and the concrete activities – a strategic tool. The absence of this link also led to rejections of many of field proposed activities. This is now covered under the new Programme Management Cycle.

#### What are the consequences

- 36. i. **Confusion in implementing the new Programme Management Cycle**  
It is understandable that with any new process, there will be a certain degree of adjustment that has to take place at the beginning. However, this can be helped by providing clear guidance and adequate tools including clear criteria for transparency purposes.
- ii. With the existing planning process and structure, it is difficult to follow an issue or topic over a longer period of time. The intervention and support from UNESCO is generally limited to a publication, a seminar or workshop while a process of change requires a set of interrelated activities implemented over a period of time.
- iii. **Difficulty in assessing the overall impact of UNESCO's programmes on the development of Member States**  
While UNESCO's individual activities may be broadly relevant to the country needs, the overall effects and contribution to country development and priorities is difficult to identify because of the absence of a strategic framework that presents the rationale for UNESCO interventions.
- iv. **In the past, UNESCO intervention was not strategically planned**  
With the absence of national or cluster strategy in the past, office intervention has been opportunist (including extra budgetary activities which depend on what funding is available from donors) and not strategically planned.
- v. **Cluster priorities without any funding or activity.**  
As explained earlier, in the 32 C/5, the evaluations identified cluster priority areas which did not have any funding because the activities proposed by the field were not approved by the sectors. And in some cases, there were funds decentralized to field offices which were not identified in their cluster priorities. This resulted in some offices being unable to meet the expressed needs of the Member States.
- vi. **Missed opportunity for fundraising**  
As stated by donors during interviews, the absence of national priorities in the cluster strategy could lead to missed opportunities for extra budgetary funding from donors who have an interest in certain Member States.

## Recommendations

### 37. i. **Distinguish responsibilities of regional bureaux (RB) and cluster offices (CO) based on UNESCO global roles.**

If the current structure of RB and CO is to be maintained, the roles need to be clarified and the resources for both types of office needs to be significantly strengthened. However, strengthening a multi-sectoral CO would to a large extent undermine the need and justification for the strengthening of RB which were established to provide technical support to the Cos. The strengthening of each type of office should be done strategically based on their specific mandates and the overall global roles of UNESCO.

Consideration might be given to the following:

- RB to provide technical backstopping to Member States through COs on UNESCO's normative roles e.g. advocacy, policy development, capacity building. This also takes into account that the RB in performing these roles, has a comparative advantage compared to COs as the RB has a broader view of the other clusters within the region e.g. ability to draw the lessons learned from other clusters. This points to the need for RB staffing to be of the higher level professional staff (P4 and above).
- COs to provide support to Member States on operational roles i.e. provision of funding and operational support. Based on these, generally the COs staffing could remain, as it is now i.e. entry to mid level professional staff (P1, P2, P3) with a few high level professional staff for oversight, supervisory roles and to provide some upstream normative support. This would mean that most of programme staff in the COs will become programme officers instead of "specialists".

### ii. **Recognize that some National Offices (Nos) are in effect performing cluster functions.**

The evaluations showed that the Nos have been able to support Member States quite effectively and a number of them have better capacity than some of the Cos (through EB resources and short-term temporary personnel). Some of the Nos have also been performing cluster roles and providing support to other Member States within and beyond the cluster (Phnom Penh in Culture area, Mozambique providing support to Portuguese speaking countries in Africa, Islamabad in the Education area to support the Teheran Cluster). Given that the almost all of the existing COs cannot effectively perform their mandates given the limited resources available, the remaining NO's should be encouraged to take on a cluster role in their area of specialization and consideration might also be given to taking cluster office responsibility away from Regional Bureaux and passing it to an effective NO in the cluster (say to Phnom Penh in the case of the Mekong Cluster).

### iii. **Clarify programme delivery mechanisms in the operational plans and workplans**

The detailed guidelines on the development of operational/work plans should include a requirement to specify the programme delivery mechanism and the resources required to implement these plans. By doing so, support from HQ and Regional Bureaux will be clearly specified which will allow the relevant entities to plan ahead with their limited resources.

### iv. **Cluster Strategy as a resource mobilization tool**

Even though the cluster strategy is an excellent introductory document which can effectively serve to communicate the vision of the cluster to potential donors, it does not constitute a resource mobilization strategy. A written fund raising strategy with projected targets would assist the office in its fund raising efforts. Such a strategy has to be backed up by a collection of well-written (with appropriately formulated expected results, indicators, provision for evaluation, etc.) project proposals. The fund raising strategy should be clearly linked to the cluster strategy and the strategies for each member state within the cluster. The strategies should clearly indicate the priority areas for interventions in the cluster (as well as in each Member States within the cluster) and as such should provide the overall focus necessary for successful implementation and the achievement of results.

- v. **Development of adequate tools to support the implementation of the new Programme Management Cycle.**  
This responsibilities needs to be shared among the relevant central services in collaboration with field offices and programme sectors who are the primary users of the tools.
- vi. **Development of accountability mechanisms**  
IOS has developed a draft of table of authority and accountability for programme planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The table specifies the authorities and accountabilities entrusted to each UNESCO entity and the related accountability mechanism. There are a number of accountability mechanisms that have been identified in the table that need to be developed by the relevant services/sectors. IOS has also prepared a draft process and template for performance agreements between senior management (ADGs, Directors and Heads of Offices) with their reporting officer which should serve as the basis for performance reports (which are an accountability mechanism in reporting achievement of the agreed expected results).
- vii. **An over-arching Programme Review Committee (PRC)**  
The PRCs proposed are sector specific. What is missing, and needed, in addition is an over-arching PRC which reviews each offices proposals as a complete package and not just individually by sector.

### C. Structure and Resources

38. This chapter covers the following:
- To what extent UNESCO has the capacity to organize and establish effective systems and procedures, human and financial resources to implement its plan and fulfill its mandate

#### Findings

39. More financial and human resources are increasingly delegated to field offices. Offices are of the opinion that the process is moving in the right direction and are most satisfied with the Education Sector. However, the extent of delegation is still not adequate for the offices to perform effectively.

40. The cluster offices, with the existing human and financial resources, are not able to perform their roles effectively. During interviews with IOS, various stakeholders in the countries where there used to be UNESCO offices expressed the view that they had experienced no significant impact from the establishment of cluster offices. Given their limited capacity it is not feasible for the Cluster Office to fully represent and fill the gaps created in countries which are now without UNESCO offices.

41. The stakeholders (Government, multi and bilateral partners, other UN agencies) stated that the UNESCO accessibility and visibility in those countries had been weakened. Efforts had nevertheless been made by the cluster offices by identifying focal points within the existing staff in the office for each Member States. Visits by staff to the Member States etc were not adequate. It is clear that there can be no mechanism that can replace presence of UNESCO office in a country.

42. In all cluster offices reviewed, the national role is overpowering the cluster roles. More resources are allocated to the country where the cluster office is located simply because of the country benefit from a direct access to UNESCO staff and resources. There were a few exceptions such as the allocation of Education programme funding in the Windhoek cluster of which 55% was allocated to Angola which had been identified as a priority area as agreed in the cluster strategy.

43. The effectiveness of regional bureaux support varies. While some cluster/national offices confirmed that the involvement and impact of support have increased and improved, all offices expressed the view that further support was needed. Again, with the limited resources available to the RB this is not realistic. IOS observations also revealed that where the cluster office also functions as regional bureaux, the role of regional bureaux was overpowering the cluster roles.

44. The evaluation results for the national offices are encouraging. While they have very limited human and financial resources, but UNESCO's visibility in the country is high in particular among Government Partners. For example, in Cambodia the Head of Office is currently both the Chair of the Education Sector Working Group, bringing together all development partners and the HIV/AIDS theme group.

#### Why does this happen

45. i. **Inadequate human resource capacity of the cluster offices**  
Discussions with various stakeholders in the Member States where there used to be UNESCO offices confirmed that prior to the implementation of the existing decentralization strategy, many of the previous country offices were small and relatively invisible – meaning that a country presence is no guarantee for visibility, quality of partnership and high impact. This means that the strategy of closing the small offices was in the right direction. However, there is a need for strong multi-sectoral cluster offices so that the Member States can be better served.
- The existing decentralization strategy which aims to staff each cluster office with one programme specialist in each area of UNESCO competence is not realistic to support the effective functioning of a cluster office. Currently some offices still do not have the human resources as planned in the decentralization strategy. Even if all these posts are filled, it still will not meet the required resources to up to seven Member States within a cluster.
- ii. **Inadequate staffing level in the cluster offices**  
In addition to inadequate numbers of staff, stakeholders expressed concerns that UNESCO was not recruiting sufficiently senior programme specialists and that the Office's technical capacities have not uniformly satisfied expectations and are sometimes outmatched by those of their national counterparts.
- iii. **Imbalance between programme budget and staffing between sectors**  
In some offices, there are programme areas with much higher programme budgets compared to another areas which have more staff resources.
- iv. **Lack of clarity as to support provided by cluster offices and regional bureaux**  
There is a need to clearly distinguish the support performed by cluster offices vs regional bureaux. Staff in the regional bureaux stated that in performing their responsibilities it is not easy to distinguish between regional and cluster related tasks. Member States are also confused. In some cases, they requested support from the regional bureaux directly instead of to the cluster/national office.
- v. **Lack of focus on major roles that UNESCO should play in the field**  
As discussed under the "Roles and Strategy" section of this report the offices are performing a wide range of roles which requires a wide range of technical competence and expertise among their staff. With the limited resources, this clearly cannot be performed effectively.
- vi. **Limited financial resources to serve all Member States**  
There are many examples of cluster activities which should cover all Member States within the cluster but which were only budgeted for below \$10,000. The limited funding limits the flexibility of the offices in designing the activity and limit the impact for Member States.
- vii. **Large number of low budget activities**  
A large number of activities, most with budgets between \$5,000 to \$10,000, each requiring separate reporting and follow-up demand very high human resource support.
- viii. **The criteria for decision making on decentralized resource allocation and the process for decentralizing these resources are uneven between sectors.**

- ix. **Limited authority of the field offices in managing their resources.**  
Field offices do not have any authority to decide on the allocation of posts within the Office to align them with the work required. They do not have the authority to operate flexibly in the interests of the “whole office” to allocate resource where it is most needed. Posts are decided upon by each individual HQ sector with inadequate attention to the “whole office” needs. There is no one institutional entity which has the holistic picture of the office’s activities.

#### What are the consequences

46. i. **The roles of UNESCO in Member States with closed offices is not sufficiently visible.**  
In Member States where offices have been closed, the visibility and impact of UNESCO assistance has decreased. The level of collaboration with stakeholders and partners (government authorities, UN agencies, multi- and bilateral partners) is not adequate. Limited resources do not allow cluster offices to provide effective support to these Member States.
- ii. **Weakened credibility of cluster/national offices**  
Because of lack of capacity of the cluster/national offices (in terms of numbers as well as adequate seniority/level of staff), some partners prefer to go straight to the regional bureaux or HQ to request for higher level support. This undermines the credibility of the cluster/national offices.
- iii. **High number of contractors/consultants used** because of the broad range of activities implemented. The programme specialists are performing the roles of programme managers/officers.

#### Recommendations

47. i. **Distinguish the roles that UNESCO should play in Member States with a UNESCO office presence from those without office presence.**  
There can be no alternative arrangements that can perfectly replace the presence of a UNESCO office in a Member State. There is a need to revisit what programme delivery can and cannot be performed effectively in those Member States. UNESCO roles in these two different types of locations cannot be the same. It is recognized that regular programme funding does not permit an office to be maintained. Therefore funding should be obtained through extra budgetary funding. And to do this, extra budgetary project offices can be established headed by a CTA (Chief Technical Adviser). This mechanism has been implemented in several locations e.g. the independent Promem project in Guatemala (which, despite of the existence of the Guatemala Office, the project administratively reports to the San Jose Office and did not relate to the Guatemala Office. The project maintained its own imprest account which was submitted to DCO HQ and operated like a field office). Currently a project officer is also placed in Yemen by the Cairo Office to manage an extra budgetary project on Early Childhood Development.

A number of donors interviewed expressed their preference to support activities with high visibility which have direct impacts. These activities mostly fall under the category of “service delivery” types of activities where UNESCO roles would be provision of financial and operational support (project implementation). Given this scenario, i.e. donors preference and UNESCO’s wish to provide adequate financial support in the Member States without an office presence, it would seem sensible to consider the following:

- In the Member States without a UNESCO office presence, funding will be mostly obtained through extra budgetary projects including provision for staffing costs. Considering that donors are more attracted to direct impact, high visibility types of projects, the roles of UNESCO in these locations should be more on provision of financial and operational support and less on normative roles.



- In the Member States with an office presence, UNESCO roles can be wider. However, as recommended in the section “Roles and Strategies” given the limited staffing capacity (level) of the cluster offices, the types of support provided by the cluster staff are mostly on provision of financial and operational support while the normative support is mostly provided by the regional bureaux where they exist.
- ii. **Other mechanisms to assist programme delivery in Member States without an office presence.**  
 With clear division of roles as stated above Member States could be better served. However, there are still additional mechanisms that can be undertaken by the offices to support this approach. As explained earlier, establishment of a project office funded by extra budgetary resources is one mechanism, The others are:
- Securing agreement with UNDP to fund staff costs for a programme specialist to assist the government in developing a sectoral policy (e.g. tentative agreement is secured in Yemen to develop a culture policy)
  - Focal point within the Office by sector (Windhoek)
  - Inter-cluster cooperation (e.g. Windhoek and New Delhi)
  - Use expertise/capacity available in the national offices (Islamabad, Phnom Penh)
  - Reliance on Natcom (Laos, Mongolia).
- iii. **Enhance collaboration with other agencies**  
 In some offices, these initiatives have been successful in enhancing programme delivery. For example, in Islamabad, the office collaborate with UNIC (United Nations Information Center) which has a small budget but has good access to the media. In some events, UNIC contributed their access to media while UNESCO provided funds for other parts of the activity. Similar collaboration was being prepared with UNAIDS.
- iv. **Establish a mechanism where field office budgets (RP, staff costs, running/indirect costs) are reviewed and allocated as a consolidated package.**  
 As reported in 167EX/14, the current resourcing approach requires offices to go through a separate planning or “bidding” exercise with each HQ sector, requesting and receiving separate envelopes for each major programme area. This is a vertical, sectoral approach to programming which inhibits cross-sectoral initiatives. Furthermore, the allocation of different types of budgets is done by different HQ sectors/services. The RP programme budget is administered by HQ programme sectors, the running/indirect costs by BFC, the staff cost by BB. This, coupled with the limited authority that field offices have in allocating its financial and human resources, are some of the reasons for the imbalance of programme budget and staffing capacity between sectors in some of the offices. The sector with significantly larger amounts of funds has fewer numbers of staff. There is a need for a mechanism whereby all budgets for an office are reviewed as a consolidated package.
- v. **Increase authority of field offices to manage programme and resources.**  
 For “decentralization” to be meaningful, authority to the field in programme management, deciding programme delivery mechanisms and managing resources should be increased. More authority in the selection of staffing, allocation of staffing within the office, allocation of funds etc need to be delegated to the offices. If the offices are to be held accountable for achieving their programme objectives and delivering the expected results, then they should be given adequate authority to manage their resources.

## **D. Activities and Results**

48. This section covers:
- To what extent UNESCO is able to deliver and provide services that are relevant and valued by Member States

## Findings

49. In reviewing achievement of results, the field office evaluations drew mainly on findings from secondary materials, like progress and evaluation reports, as the time available did not always allow actual site visits or to perform independent review of the quality of individual projects and the results.

50. In most of the offices evaluated, results are most often synonymous with successfully implemented activities and documented outputs. Annual reports and other progress reports list activities which have been completed: policy documents produced, people trained in various subjects and guidelines made available for use. IOS evaluations have problems documenting change because a certain methodology is required - often the collection of time series data. On the other hand, UNESCO objectives are referring to outcomes and impact from what the organization is supporting.

51. When available data permits, during the evaluations IOS performed mapping of activities in the work plans against the priorities in the cluster strategy which are the results of consultations with Member States. The results showed that in general the majority of cluster priorities have some funding approved by HQ and several activities in the work plans were established to meet those priorities. However, there are cases where there are no activities in the work plans to support some of the cluster priority areas which have been agreed with the Member States during the cluster consultation because there was no funding allocated by the sectors. In some cases, there was funding allocated for MLAs which had not been identified as priority areas by the cluster.

52. There were many encouraging observations arising from the projects visited or reviewed by IOS. These showed that UNESCO had made positive contributions to the Member States. As for extra budgetary projects, IOS meetings with some major donors also showed that most of them were complimentary about the projects implemented by UNESCO. This was also clear from the fact that some donors had already agreed to fund the continuation of an existing project (e.g. Conservation of the Lahore Fort project in Islamabad with the Norwegian Government). IOS also visited some projects in Phnom Penh, Hanoi, etc.

53. By way of illustration the Chamcar Bei Education Project managed by the Phnom Penh office resulted in the following achievements:

- Successful capacity building of community leaders in planning and managing their literacy and community development activities.
- Functional literacy, which directly benefited 1,575 illiterate persons, 80% of whom were girls and women. 90% of participants passed the literacy test after completing the course.
- Early childhood care and education, which served a large number of 3-6 year old children.
- Income-generation skill training for girls and women. Out of 300 adolescent girls and women trained in weaving and tailoring 50% can now use the skills to earn themselves a living.

## Why does this happen

### 54. i. **Positive factors in the success stories**

- Obtaining strong involvement from the communities
- Sound partnership with local NGOs and local government authorities.
- The ability to spot resource mobilization opportunities.

### ii. **Lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation of progress and results.**

It is essential that information about inputs, activities and outputs are collected and used for monitoring purposes, but this has not been done systematically. There was limited information available on individual and institutional change or the level of achievement of objectives – since most objectives refer to change and not only outputs. There are several reasons for this:

- UNESCO supported activities in the regular programme are small and a separate evaluations or surveys would possibly cost more than the activity.

- In most cases it is not feasible to trace any measurable impact from micro projects on macro level processes. Small investments may have broader catalytic effects, but in most cases it will not make sense measuring the relative contribution of a small UNESCO activity.
- There was a lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation of progress and results in almost all offices visited. It seems, however, that extra budgetary projects are more systematically evaluated than regular programme activities because of donor requirements. External evaluations were for instance carried out of several extra budgetary projects in Mozambique (e.g. the Media Development Project) with good results. On the other hand, the regional HIV/AIDS project funded by the Belgium Government was not yet evaluated. It seems that UNESCO is not planning an evaluation – indicating that there is no systematic evaluation practice unless there is a requirement from a donor.
- Project monitoring is mostly done through direct observations such as project visits or attendance in meetings/trainings/workshops. Therefore, lack of funds is often used by offices as justification for not performing systematic monitoring. Monitoring could, however, be done in a more systematic manner by also collecting and analyzing data and information based on a set of performance indicators.
- SISTER – UNESCO’s management information system should be a tool for assessing progress and results, but does not function optimally for project/activity progress monitoring and reporting of results.

iii. **HQ does not review and approve strategic direction but each and every activity.**

In the previous biennium, the approval process of field office proposals is sector and activity driven. The cluster strategy, if it existed, was not considered in the approval process. The sectoral strategy is dominant and there was no established mechanism to link these two strategies resulting in rejection of activities proposed by the field. In the 33 C/5, the Programme Management Cycle attempts to address this issue by establishing HQ divisional and field office strategic plans which should be informed by the sectoral strategic plans. These field strategic plans seek to provide the bridge between the global strategies and the actual needs of the Member States.

iv. **Absence of exit strategy**

In a few cases, IOS observed that an exit strategy is included in the project document. An example was in the Conservation of the Lahore Fort in Islamabad where the project objectives as specified in the project plan include “A sustainable management and conservation plan for regular maintenance of the Fort developed and agreed upon with Government of Pakistan”.

However, in a number of projects reviewed, it was observed that UNESCO has participated in the implementation of the projects over a long period and they did not include arrangements to hand them over to counterparts. While the term “long period” here is subjective to each project, IOS observed that in some cases the projects should have been handed over to Government authorities or NGOs or even local community. Moreover, the involvement of UNESCO in many of these projects was more in terms of provision of financial and operational support.

What are the consequences

55. i. **Difficulty in measuring impact of UNESCO programme intervention**

As explained earlier, one of the challenges was to collect information and assess results – if we mean by results sustained change in personal and institutional behavior - and not only documentation that a workshop is organized, a policy document prepared and a number of people involved in training. Change does not automatically follow from successful completion of activities. Outcomes and impact of UNESCO activities are often difficult to measure – and most often not measured.

ii. **Challenges in securing the financial sustainability of projects/activities**

For a large number of UNESCO activities long-term sustainability is not such a critical issue, for example organizing a seminar, preparing a set of guidelines, being involved in a policy

development process. When the activities are completed – they do not necessarily need to be sustained, e.g. an EFA policy process can be completed, but needs to be followed up in terms of funding, implementation and supervision. However, this is not the case with many other projects. Financial sustainability is particularly important in any resource limited environment such as UNESCO. The phasing out of UNESCO support should be given more attention in project documents. This should not be only about bringing in another donor to replace UNESCO but handing over the ownership and continuation of the projects/activities to the Government Authority, local authority or communities and NGOs. Discussions with field staff confirmed that the majority of them do not believe that many UNESCO supported activities will be sustained in the future without outside external support.

iii. **Heavy demand for financial and human resources**

Because of the lack of an exit strategy, projects that should have been handed over to other partners were implemented by UNESCO over a long period. In consequence, this leads to the need for allocating further human and financial resources and adds pressure to the already limited resources available.

iv. **Inability to meet the cluster priorities**

The absence of funding for some of the cluster priorities resulted in “innovative” actions taken by some offices. In the majority of cases, given that the definition of the MLA is broad, the offices try to “fit in” their priorities within the MLA. However, as explained earlier, this leads to the spreading of activities in many MLAs. In other cases, as explained in 167EX/14, offices implement the activities which do not correspond to the approved work plans. Lack of proper monitoring and accountability mechanisms often results in these practices going undetected.

## Recommendations

56. i. **Strengthening monitoring system**

Efforts are being made to re-engineer SISTER, as the organizational tool for monitoring of project implementation. As stressed in the IOS evaluation report on SISTER, users need to be heavily involved in the design stage of the “new” SISTER. Users should not be presented of a prototype that they should comment on. What needs to be done is going back to the drawing board and redefining what is needed based on users current and future requirements.

ii. **Project document/plan**

For those projects which call for sustainability, the project document or plan should include components of an exit strategy such as capacity building of local/government partners. Project documents should also include clear and realistic timeframes and a proper sequence of activities/tasks. At its 169<sup>th</sup> session, the Executive Board raised concerns over the high number of outstanding extra-budgetary projects. In IOS’s view, it would be wise to request each HQ division and field office to review their portfolio of projects and identify the exit strategy for those that need to be closed.

The chances for successful fund raising are clearly enhanced in cases where UNESCO has demonstrated its expertise and competence in relevant ‘pilot, demonstration, or introductory’ projects. A good example here is the project ‘Advocacy and Training for Early Childhood Development’, an extra-budgetary project funded by USAID and executed by the Harare office. The donor had been pleased with the high level of professionalism demonstrated by the FO in executing the project, and commented to the evaluation team that such good work has helped to establish the credentials of the Office as the basis for attracting additional and new funding.

## D. Linkages and Relationships

57. This section covers:

- i. To what extent the Government, donors and other partners have confidence in UNESCO
- ii. Are UNESCO offices well linked and work effectively with their partners.

### Findings

#### Government Partners

58. UNESCO is well known among Government partners. In those countries where UNESCO has an office, despite the relatively small resources available, the organization is highly visible. However, even senior officers in Government were not always aware of UNESCO's specific activities and achievements. They were not aware what it meant for UNESCO to be a UN specialized agency. Some Ministers interviewed encouraged UNESCO to focus on upstream priority advice and capacity building but there was a tendency to look at all UN agencies as funding agencies. Two main issues raised by most of the Government partners interviewed by IOS are the relatively low level of the experts in UNESCO offices to deal with senior government officials and the very small amount of funding provided for UNESCO activities.

59. It is interesting to note that some Government representatives appreciate UNESCO as "their own" membership organization with primarily a technical mandate – and not as "any other donor". Largely, this is because of the existence of the National Commissions which serve as the "bridge" between UNESCO and the Member States. This is a unique comparative advantage for UNESCO.

60. In the countries where UNESCO does not have offices (or where they had been closed), the Government conveyed the view that the visibility and accessibility to UNESCO had been weakened. However, they were pleased with the improved planning processes including the cluster consultations involving Member States.

61. Relationships between the Office and the National Commissions of the respective countries in the cluster vary significantly in terms of the ease and openness of mutual communication. In all cases, the National Commission serves as the liaison between the Office and government ministries.

62. Very positive observations were made with regards to the cooperation with National Commissions in Laos and Mongolia where they represent an asset for the organization and assisted programme delivery tremendously. Decentralization has enhanced UNESCO's capacity to partner with the Mongolia National Commission and more broadly with the Government of Mongolia. As confirmed with the Government authorities, the establishment of the Beijing cluster office has increased the relevance and consultative nature of UNESCO projects in the country; enhanced communication between UNESCO specialists and project implementers; and facilitated the sharing of lessons and experience among the professionals in the cluster countries. Prior to the visit of the UNESCO Director-General in July 2002, representatives of the Beijing Office, the National Commission and country authorities identified priorities for UNESCO's future work in the country. These priorities were encapsulated in an Aide Memoire signed by the Chairman of the National Commission and the Director-General. It remains the key working document in 2004. The following quotes are provided by the Central Government Authority of Mongolia "*Mongolia's foreign policy has become more open over the past 10 years. We're no longer hiding local problems – we're showing them, and seeking help. The Science sector is one of the least developed sectors in our country. Bilateral agreements can help us to build the labs, but first we need to develop and design the policy framework and structure. UNESCO gave us good, hands-on expertise in developing our "Master Plan" [for Science and Technology policy]*".

63. However, in some other countries, the mediating role of the National Commission has in some cases created an impediment to the flow of information. In addition, some National Commission representatives took exception to the Office making direct contacts with Ministries.

64. It is also interesting to note that in some Member States where UNESCO does not have an office presence, the National Commission was not known by any of the bi- or multilateral donors that IOS spoke to

and the Commission did not seem to have a high status and a reputation of effectiveness in the Government – to a large extent explained by their meager resources. The capacity of the Commissions varies, but it seems unrealistic at the moment for some to compensate for the loss of a UNESCO Office and to take over its role.

65. As discussed in 167EX/14, with regard to the Participation Programme (PP), the formulation of the activities by the National Commissions is done in isolation from UNESCO field offices. The PP projects are highly valued by the National Commissions, which is not surprising since they are owned and controlled by National Commissions.

#### Other partners

66. UNESCO was taking an active role in UN collaboration (particularly the development of UNDAFs) in most of the countries visited but is constrained in terms of human and financial resources. However, in some countries without a UNESCO office participation in UNCT activities was limited and the Resident Coordinator encouraged UNESCO to place a focal point in their office or in one of the other major agencies (say UNICEF). Partners in UN agencies in China highlighted UNESCO's strong participation in two UN Country Team (UNCT) Thematic Groups but also underscored the need for UNESCO to more clearly identify and maximize its comparative advantage, particularly in light of the organization's relatively low financing capacity. The UNDAFs reviewed aligned well with national priorities identified by UNESCO. Most UN partners recognized the Education sector as UNESCO's top sector of influence, followed by the Culture sector. Some partners described UNESCO's privileged access to the Ministry of Education as a "niche" for the organization in advocating for the expansion of preventive HIV/AIDS education and in supporting the creation of a new National EFA Forum with participation of both the UNCT and national authorities.

67. Bilateral donors are very open about their views on UNESCO. They tend to be most critical to the visibility and effectiveness of the organization. In the countries where UNESCO does not have offices, they expressed concerns that UNESCO has been largely absent. It was felt that UNESCO was not present in processes where future education policies in the countries was discussed. Most of the donors interviewed did say that UNESCO needed to enhance its core human resource capacity before they would consider funding programme activities through UNESCO.

68. IOS also met with representatives of some civil society organizations which had been supported by UNESCO and were collaborating with UNESCO in a large number of activities. The relationships were good. However, UNESCO needs to guard against developing "unfair competition" with these organizations. There are some perceptions conveyed to IOS that UNESCO as an international organization had "stolen" the extra budgetary funds that could have been raised by these organizations and there had already been one instance in which questions had been raised as to whether the UNESCO Office was eligible to bid for funds in competition with local interests.

69. One success story in working with a local partners is the cooperation between the UNESCO Beijing Office with Institutes based in China. The Institutes have played a significant role in fulfilling the UNESCO functions, serving as clearing houses (gathering, transferring, and disseminating information), laboratories of ideas (anticipating and defining important emerging problems and strategies/policies to deal with them) as well as capacity builders (organizing international cooperation in building human and institutional capacities) through seminars and training courses. Some staff held the view that the relationship between UNESCO and the Institutes warrant further clarification, particularly because of the Institutes' financial and organizational autonomy. Notably, all Institute representatives interviewed noted that, while UNESCO's financial support was declining over time, UNESCO's partnership, both financial and intellectual, remained very important to their organization's on-going effectiveness. An example is collaboration with the Institute to Foster Capacity Building between scientists in China and DPRK. In the last biennium, UNESCO contributed \$10,000 in support of seminars and workshops by the International Research and Training Center on Erosion and Sedimentation (IRTCES). Representatives of the Institute highlighted that the training created opportunities for deeper capacity building between Chinese scientists and younger scientists from DPRK. The positive learning experience of an IRTCES trainee, for example, prompted the DPRK Meteorological Institute to contact IRTCES to conduct an on-site training on flood control and mathematical modeling in DPRK for a larger group of scientists. The request demonstrates both client demand for the services of the Institute as well as cooperation and capacity building between Member States in the Cluster.

### Why does this happen and what are the consequences

70. Most of the causes and consequences on the above issues have been raised earlier in this report e.g. lack of adequate staffing capacity, inadequate financial resources, issues relating to the planning process, lack of focus on UNESCO roles, lack of UNESCO visibility in Member States without an office presence etc.

### Recommendations

71.
  - i. Partners recognized ED and CLT as top sectors of influence and some partners described UNESCO's privileged access to the Ministry of Education as a "niche" for UNESCO in advocating for the expansion of preventive HIV/AIDS education and in supporting the creation of a new National EFA forum in China with participation of UNCT and national authorities. This supports the mandate of UNESCO as a specialized agency to give priority to the upstream policy development and advocacy, capacity building roles.
  - ii. There is a need to review the structure and position of the National Commissions within their Government structure to ensure adequate access, status, staffing and operational resources for the Commissions. For those that need improvement, discussion with senior Government Officials is needed.
  - iii. The planning of the participation programme should be align with the cluster priorities/strategies which should serve as a common vision that would bring the office and the National Commission together to focus on a common set of priorities as "one UNESCO".