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pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
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Contributors:

Amir Piric
Sameer Pise
Dawn Clemitson
Clinton Watson

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key Results

UNESCO Montevideo is functioning well and is contributing to policy development through its active engagement in policy debate and by shaping the policy agenda in the region. Recent efforts in the science policy area are particularly promising and aim to influence regional science policies in the region.

Internal controls in the Office have improved since the previous IOS audit conducted in 2004. While a number of internal control issues require attention, the Office is generally well administered and compliant with UNESCO regulations, rules and procedures.

To enhance UNESCO's regional science activities, the Science Sector should consider formulating a clear strategy for field offices to establish clear roles for regional coordination, monitoring and sub-regional programming. While this needs to be considered within the context of the ongoing review of UNESCO's field structure, interim measures could already be introduced.

Background, Scope and Objective

Established in 1949, the Montevideo Office is one of the earliest field offices of UNESCO. At its inception, the Office was UNESCO's Centre for Scientific Cooperation for Latin America, but now has broader functions broken down into three distinct thematic and geographic functions:

Regional Science Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC): covering the 33 countries of the LAC region, the Regional Bureau aims to strengthen multilateral technical cooperation in science and technology in the region and has adopted work priorities in environmental sciences, the basic sciences, engineering and science policies.

UNESCO Representative for MERCOSUR: the Office plans, executes and coordinates UNESCO's activities and programmes with sub-region MERCOSUR and Chile, in close cooperation with the UNESCO Offices in Brasilia and Santiago as well as the IIEP Office in Buenos Aires.

UNESCO Representative for Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay: responsible for the planning and execution of national programmes in these countries.

It should also be noted that Uruguay is one of the eight One UN pilot countries and the only middle-income pilot location. In addition, the Montevideo Office is responsible for the Villa Ocampo Antenna in the Argentine province of Buenos Aires.

The Regular Programme (RP) of the Office totals \$2.3 million for this biennium (excluding staff costs), the sixth largest RP programmatic budget of UNESCO's 52 field offices. In terms of extrabudgetary funding, Montevideo performs similar to most other offices in the LAC region and extrabudgetary resources have been increasing over the last several biennia. The Office is relatively well-staffed with 1 P/5, 5 P/4 and 3 P/3 international posts in addition to that for the Director of the Office.

The purpose of the joint evaluation and audit of UNESCO's Office in Montevideo was to:

- assess the Office's budget and programme, strategic planning, programme results, and relations with stakeholders and beneficiaries; and

- provide assurance on its risk management, controls and compliance with UNESCO regulations, rules and procedures.

Achievements

The mission concluded that the Montevideo Office:

- Receives sufficient Regular Programme resources, with the sixth largest allocation amongst all UNESCO field offices, and maintains adequate programme staffing levels in comparison to other UNESCO offices.
- Has steadily increased extrabudgetary resources over the last several biennia. The Office has developed a resource mobilization plan and assigned accountabilities to support continued progress.
- Has generally met the challenges of effective participation in the Delivering as One initiative in Uruguay. It has also developed a plan which guides the work of each sector and appropriately balances the Office's national, cluster and regional functions.
- Has effectively focused on upstream modalities, such as policy advice and assistance in the design and implementation of strategies and plans, and could be considered as a role model for the delivery of such work.
- Manages its portfolio of Regular Programme and extrabudgetary activities in accordance with UNESCO rules and procedures, and expected results have largely been attained.
- Maintains good relations with stakeholders in the region, particularly those in Uruguay.
- Has generally maintained effective financial and administrative controls.

Challenges and Opportunities

Improvements can be made in the control framework and operations of the Office as follow:

- The regional science responsibilities are not clearly established as the Natural Sciences sector has yet to finalize a clear strategy for its field offices. In this regard, specific opportunities include a more effective assessment of regional needs and greater coordination of activities across the region.
- The science stakeholders surveyed across the region were generally positive about the Office, but highlighted the need to improve communication and coordination. Communication of results achieved and impact of the Office's work needs particular attention.
- The publications process in the Office should be brought in line with UNESCO's guidelines to ensure compliance with copyrights and should improve distribution planning and stock management.
- The cost-recovery policy is not yet implemented by the Office and needs to be considered in planning future extrabudgetary activities.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1 DIR/MTV needs to strengthen its regional science functions and communications in order to play a greater coordination role throughout the region in all science areas.

Recommendation 2 ADG/SC needs to further develop a strategy for field offices including clear roles in regional coordination, and monitoring, as well as sub-regional programming.

Recommendation 3 DIR/MTV needs to enhance the Office's collaboration with leading science policy centres of excellence, such as SPRU, MERIT, the Argentine Universities of Quilmes and Buenos Aires and the Status University of Campinas in Brazil, in order to maintain the Office's cutting edge in upstream work.

Recommendation 4 DIR/MTV needs to consolidate the publication tasks under the responsibility of a publications officer charged with implementing UNESCO's publications guidelines.

Recommendation 5 DIR/MTV, during the planning of phase three of the project entitled "Support to implement Water Center for Arid and semi-arid zones in Latin America and the Caribbean", needs to realign UNESCO's collaboration with CAZALAC in accordance with the founding statutes, UNESCO's cost recovery policy and disclosure requirements under Resolution 103 of the 35th General Conference.

Recommendation 6 DIR/MTV needs to improve the visibility of the Office's results and impacts, especially those beyond Uruguay that relate to the Office's cluster and regional functions, both at Headquarters and beyond the Latin American and Caribbean region.

Recommendation 7 DIR/MTV needs to produce a concise annual or biennial report, made available online, of the Office's key results and impacts that demonstrate in particular the medium and long-term changes brought about by the Office in Uruguay, the cluster countries and the broader LAC region.

Recommendation 8 DIR/MTV needs to ensure performance or initiate recovery of the funds advanced under contract No. 3420197531.

Recommendation 9 DIR/MTV needs to establish a procedure to ensure travel plans and mission reports are regularly shared with the Science sector.

Recommendation 10 DIR/MTV needs to establish an annual procurement plan for the Office.

Recommendation 11 DIR/MTV needs to ensure that non-expendable property is tagged and subject to annual verification by someone independent of the recordkeeping and custody roles.

Recommendation 12 DIR/MTV needs to review the staffing structure of the Administrative Unit and formulate plans to address staff or workload changes in the Administrative Unit with particular attention to cross-training and staff development in view of potential near-term retirements.

Recommendation 13 DIR/DIT needs to implement enhancements to the SharePoint MM and TV module and provide the required connectivity bandwidth as soon as possible to improve the efficiency of the tool.