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COMMENTS BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL
ON EVALUATIONS UNDERTAKEN DURING THE
2006-2007 BIENNIUM

SUMMARY

In accordance with the provisions of 176 EX/Decision 28, the Director-General hereby submits to the Executive Board a short report on some of the evaluations carried out in the 2006-2007 biennium, together with his comments.

Decision proposed: paragraph 7.

BACKGROUND

1.   At the 176th session of the Executive Board, by 176 EX/Decision 28, the Executive Board reiterated that the Director-General should continue to report periodically to it on evaluations carried out on the Organization's programme activities, on the progress made in the follow-up to evaluation recommendations and in strengthening the quality of the evaluations undertaken.

2.   Quality of evaluations: The Director-General is committed to further improving the quality of the evaluations undertaken and to reinforcing the evaluation culture in managing for results. Evidence shows that there is increasing interest in evaluation in the Organization. For instance, the debate on evaluations during the 176th session of the Executive Board indicate this, and so too is the fact that findings from several evaluations have informed some important programming decisions taken by senior management.

3.   Layout: Summaries of the evaluation reports are given in the first part, presented in tabular form as requested by the Executive Board (175 EX/Decision 26). The recommendations are positioned alongside the findings and/or conclusions to which they refer. The findings are given in terms of achievements and challenges as assessed by the evaluators, with the last column in each table providing brief accounts of the actions that the Director-General has already taken, or is taking, in response to the recommendations made. In the second part, the Director-General presents the generic lessons that have emerged from the evaluations.

PART I – PRESENTATION OF EVALUATION REPORTS:

- Evaluation of the Information for All Programme (IFAP);

- Evaluation of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS).

4.   Title of the Evaluation: EVALUATION OF THE INFORMATION FOR ALL PROGRAMME (IFAP)

Brief description and background of the activities evaluated / reviewed:
IFAP was created in 2001 as a successor to the General Information Programme and the International Informatics Programme. It was created as an intergovernmental programme concerned with facilitating UNESCO's and Member States' response to the emerging issues of the Information Society. Its formation also highlighted concerns around the creation of more equitable knowledge societies partly as an outcome of efforts to streamline existing activities and partly in recognition of changing technological circumstances. IFAP provides a framework for international cooperation and partnerships. It supports the development of common strategies, methods and tools for building an information society for all. The objectives of IFAP are to: - Promote international reflection and debate on the ethical, legal and societal challenges of the information society   - Promote and widen access to information in the public domain through the organization, digitization and preservation of information   - Support training, continuing education and lifelong learning in the fields of communication, information and informatics   - Support the production of local content and foster the availability of indigenous knowledge through basic literacy and ICT literacy training   - Promote the use of international standards and best practices in communication, information and informatics in UNESCO's fields of competences   - Promote information and knowledge networking at local, national, regional and international levels.
Budget
Since IFAP's creation, the total budget was $2,216,965. This includes $243,000 for the organization of the Council sessions and the Bureau meetings from the regular programme and budget and $1,973,965 in extrabudgetary resources.
This Evaluation
The purpose of the evaluation was to review the role and future relevance of IFAP in pursuing the six core IFAP objectives. The evaluation was expected to provide UNESCO with an account of the overall performance of IFAP as well as specific implementable recommendations for future activities. It was expected to focus on results achieved of IFAP activities as well as assess the relevance of IFAP to meet future challenges. The methodology of the evaluation included: (i) 32 interviews of IFAP stakeholders, both inside and outside UNESCO; (ii) extensive review of Executive Board documents, IFAP Council reports and papers, relevant UNESCO publications, UNESCO speeches; (iii) survey of the 182 IFAP National Committees and National Commissions for UNESCO, with a response rate of 5%; (iv) survey of 18,000 stakeholders with 950 responses; (v) survey of all recipients of IFAP grants, but the response was exceptionally low; (VI) one case study of an IFAP National Committee. The cost of the evaluation was US $75,900.

	Findings and conclusions	**Recommendations**	**Actions taken/to be taken by the Director-General**
	Relevance		
1	**Achievements**: IFAP provides an ongoing institutional framework within which many of the issues which were addressed within the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) may continue to be carried forward. **Challenges**: IFAP had little or no visibility or activity during the WSIS meetings themselves, but IFAP could play a leading strategic role in the WSIS implementation.	The Council should identify what role IFAP can play in the implementation of the WSIS Plan of Action as part of the strategic planning process. It should examine the possibility of reassembling all relevant activities within the Information Society Division, the CI Sector and other Sectors, which will contribute to implement the WSIS Plan of Action. The result would be a restructured UNESCO WSIS follow-up programme in which IFAP plays a leading strategic role to support the development of knowledge societies for all.	See actions under Recommendation No. 3

	Findings and conclusions	Recommendations	Actions taken/to be taken by the Director-General
	Results, efficiency, effectiveness		
2	**Achievements**: IFAP's key achievements have included the establishment of an intergovernmental framework and rules of procedure, including multi-stakeholder participation in its Council and Bureau meetings; the establishment of National Committees; the organization of thematic debates with governmental, NGO and other representatives; support for a number of pilot development projects and publications in IFAP's field of expertise.	Consolidate these achievements in the further implementation of the programme.	See below concerning the development of a strategic plan for IFAP.
3	**Challenges**: However, overall IFAP's accomplishments in the six years since its formation in 2000 have been limited and it would appear that IFAP is still in the process of development. IFAP requires greater clarity, consistency and focus with more clearly identifiable outcomes. IFAP does not have a fully developed strategic planning process, which clarifies concepts, terms/definitions, goals, priorities and courses of action. The mission, goals, objectives and activities set at the time IFAP was established are unachievable with the current funding levels. They are inconsistent as to whether IFAP should be an advisory body or an implementation body. The IFAP Council meets only every two years and IFAP has almost no resources to support inter-meeting activity in support of substantive activities.	The IFAP Council, through its Bureau, should undertake a formal strategic planning process for IFAP. With a clear focus on the results to be achieved in the future, the strategic planning process should provide direction and purpose. This strategic plan should reformulate the IFAP's mission, sharpen objectives and goals, define terms and identify priority areas for the Programme, resource requirements with potential funding sources and provisions for monitoring programme performance. The new mission should be realistic given the funding constraints.	In order to ensure that the programme fulfils its mandate, the Director-General requests the CI sector, as the Secretariat to IFAP, to assist the IFAP Council to clarify its strategic positioning by ensuring that a strategic plan is developed before the beginning of the 34 C/4 Medium-Term Strategy period. The results-based strategic plan will identify the overall goal, purpose, key activities, and resource requirements for the programme's effective operation; provisions for monitoring programme performance; modalities of cooperation with key partners including IFAP National Committees, the private sector, and NGOs; and clearly show the management arrangements with the various roles and responsibilities of the IFAP Council, Bureau and CI sector.

177 EX/26 – page 4

	Findings and conclusions	Recommendations	Actions taken/to be taken by the Director-General
	Results, efficiency, effectiveness (continued)		
4	**Challenges**: The area of primary impact for IFAP is in the development and ratification of globally accepted norms supportive of the development of knowledge societies for all, and particularly through the variety of intergovernmental instruments, standards, conventions, guidelines, statements of good practice and others. IFAP has achieved relatively little in the development of any new standards-setting instrument. The reasons for this are largely built into the initial programme design including the lack of staff and budgetary resources to undertake these activities.	The Council should reaffirm that its primary role in supporting the development aspects of "knowledge societies for all" will come through the success of its efforts in the formulation, dissemination and influence on the implementation of suitable norms, policies, standard-setting and instruments in support of these objectives. The Council, as part of the strategic planning process, should articulate a strategy for IFAP's role as a specialist standard and norm setting body in the area of the Information Society and Knowledge Societies for All. To be effective, IFAP will need access to expert knowledge within its mandate and should consult with the CSTD (Commission on Science and Technology for Development) and other United Nations agencies as appropriate.	The Director-General supports a strengthened role for IFAP in initiating new global instruments within its mandate and in consultation with other international agencies. The strategic plan will identify IFAP's specific role and contribution as a standard and norm setting body, as well as other functional roles to be played (e.g. advisory).
5	**Challenges**: The broad policy, institutional and technological framework within which IFAP is working is in continuing evolution. IFAP has difficulty in responding to the pace and complexity of these changes with its existing resources and structural limitations. Since the establishment of IFAP in 2000 an array of international agencies and initiatives have emerged, all focused on reducing the digital divide, including intergovernmental, NGO and private sector entities. IFAP has not fully engaged with these other entities, nor, as an intergovernmental body, does it have the depth of technical expertise necessary to address challenging knowledge society developments and particularly those mediated by information and communications technologies (ICT).	IFAP must have easy and ready access to relevant experts including those in NGOs and the private sector. The Council through the Secretariat should form a broad-based and inclusive Advisory Board with representation from the current NGO IFAP stakeholders, the private sector and civil society. The Board should operate primarily in an electronic and virtual mode. It should advise the Council through its Bureau on the range of its thematically structured activities, including providing input into the strategic planning process.	The Director-General supports a more active engagement with the private sector. The action in recommendation No. 3 will provide greater clarity in this regard. The IFAP Council is already an advisory board to the DG and the IFAP National Committees are advisory bodies to their UNESCO National Commissions. Therefore, the practicality/feasibility of expanding this advisory function is not apparent at this time. Alternatives will be further examined during the strategic planning exercise.

	Findings and conclusions	Recommendations	Actions taken/to be taken by the Director-General
	Results, efficiency, effectiveness (continued)		
6	**Challenges**: IFAP should have access to high quality and state of the art knowledge, experience and evaluative resources in a wide range of areas related to its mandate. The extrabudgetary projects have not been linked into information gathering or research in support of either programme development or to advance identified priority areas. The new approaches needed to address issues of information and knowledge must be based on high-quality methods for measurement and analysis.	The Secretariat should design and implement a programme of "branding" of externally funded research conducted in association with the identified priorities and policy development interests of the programme. This could link stakeholders' research and implementation activities with IFAP's activities.	The modalities for undertaking this "branding programme" will be addressed in the strategic plan.
	Sustainability		
7	**Challenges**: The slowly emerging network of National IFAP Committees represents the most significant potential resource for IFAP to make a substantive contribution to building knowledge societies for all. The extension of the National Committee network, which has recently been expanding, can provide IFAP with the means of disseminating its outputs. Only a handful of the 52 National Committees are currently operational. There has been a considerable degree of success among those few National Committees currently in active operation. The creation of a successful network of National IFAP Committees would appear among the strongest instruments available through which IFAP might exert influence at the national level and achieve a capacity to link global knowledge society concerns and objectives with local initiatives and development.	IFAP should strengthen its efforts towards the creation and operational effectiveness of National Committees with a view to developing a successful network of Committees. National Committees should take up the role of identifying areas where there may be a need for standard and norm setting support of knowledge societies at the national level. As the National Committees develop they should develop multistakeholder participation, undertake strategic planning exercises and contribute to WSIS implementation.	As part of the strategic planning exercise, IFAP will identify appropriate measures to strengthen the network of National Committees, including mobilizing extrabudgetary resources and encouraging National Commissions to provide support.

5. Title of the Evaluation: EVALUATION OF UNESCO INSTITUTE FOR STATISTICS (UIS)

Brief description and background of the activities evaluated

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) was established in 1999 to meet the growing needs of UNESCO Member States and the international community for a wider range of policy-relevant, timely, and reliable statistics in the fields of education, science, culture and communication. It is one of nine UNESCO "category one" institutes and the only institute that serves all UNESCO sectors. As a statutorily autonomous body, it is intended to be independent from UNESCO while at the same time aligning its programme with UNESCO's strategic and programmatic priorities. In doing so, it is expected to work closely with the UNESCO Secretariat, field offices, institutes and centres as well as directly serving the needs of Member States and the international community.

Budget:

US $9,020,000 is allocated to the UIS in the 33 C/5, Approved Programme and Budget.

This Evaluation

This evaluation is part of an ongoing review by UNESCO of its category one institutes in the context of its decentralization reform process. Its purpose is to inform UNESCO, Member States and partner agencies about four aspects of UIS: the relevance of its activities; the results it has achieved; the quality of its interaction and coordination with UNESCO and other partners; and the effectiveness and efficiency of its governance and management. The cost of the evaluation was US $74,000.

	Findings and conclusions	Recommendations	Actions taken/to be taken by the Director-General
	Relevance		
1	**Achievements**: There is an increasing focus on the need for policy-relevant statistics and indicators across all UNESCO sectors. In particular, there is a strong emphasis by the international development community on the measurement of progress towards EFA goals and MDGs. In this context, the core function of UIS is perhaps more relevant than ever before in the history of UNESCO. The Education Sector has traditionally been the major user of UIS data and is intended to be a key collaborator in the ongoing identification of data needs as well as analysis and interpretation of data.	In developing its next Medium-Term Strategy, UIS needs to take note of key trends in the environment for international statistics, particularly the changing needs of statistics users and policy-makers. UIS needs to be more proactive in identifying emerging issues and developing indicators and data collections in new areas, such as measurement of learning outcomes and educational quality.	The Director-General, through the Director of UIS, will act to improve the responsiveness of UIS to the needs of statistics users and policy-makers. Measurement of learning outcomes and educational quality is the second priority in UIS's Medium-Term Strategy (2008-2013).
2	**Challenges**: There is a clear expectation on the part of the Secretariat that UIS will serve all programme sectors by providing policy relevant data as well as collaborating to identify new data needs. It is expected that the Institute would expand its focus beyond education statistics. In practice, the UIS has further sharpened its focus on the collection of education statistics since its establishment.	UIS should critically assess the level of resources available for non-education sectors as part of the prioritization and planning process for its next Medium-Term Strategy, with a view to increasing the capacity of these teams at UIS.	The Director-General, through the Director of UIS, has placed the strengthening of the non-education sector as the third priority in UIS's Medium-Term Strategy (2008-2013).

Findings and conclusions (continued)		Recommendations	Actions taken/to be taken by the Director-General
	Results		
3	**Achievements**: UIS has achieved significant results, particularly in its role as a guardian of cross-national data. UIS has made positive contributions towards all aspects of its organizational mission. Significant advancements have been made in all aspects of data quality – timeliness, relevance, accessibility, accuracy and international comparability. The range of statistics and indicators available on education has grown substantially, as has the coverage of data for the world's school age population. UIS pays close attention to data quality, which may result in delays in releasing data.	UIS should continue to seek improvements in timeliness of data as a paramount objective, while not jeopardizing the potential validity and international comparability of that data.	The Director-General, through the Director of UIS, will continue to improve the timeliness and quality of data. Improving the quality of data is the first priority of the UIS's Medium-Term Strategy (2008-2013).
4	**Achievements**: In terms of the development of new methodologies, concepts and standards, UIS is generally regarded by stakeholders as effective. However, UIS could improve the visibility of its efforts in this area through wider engagement with stakeholders.	UIS needs to continue to develop its external communications strategy, particularly in relation to the website and launch of online data releases and publications, to raise its profile and cement its reputation as the premier source of internationally comparable data in its fields of competence.	The Director-General, through the Director of UIS, will continue to develop its external communications strategy with more emphasis on the website and online resources.
5	**Challenges**: In relation to the Statistical Capacity-Building (SCB) programme, there is some evidence of significant improvements in data coverage and quality in countries. However, concerns are raised about the sustainability of the results of the programme, as it appears to be regional differences in the way that UIS delivers SCB. Particular concerns are raised about the way the programme is being implemented in Africa.	For significant future capacity-building initiatives, the UIS should put in place mechanisms for a more sustainable way towards building capacity.	The Director-General, through the Director of UIS, will introduce more sustainable mechanisms for capacity-building among Member States.
6	**Challenges**: Some stakeholders in the areas of communications and culture statistics expressed frustration at the emphasis UIS placed on identifying the risks and difficulties of developing new indicators and a reluctance to suggest solutions. It was also suggested that the development of new indicators by UIS has generally been reactive.	UIS should develop wider constituencies of support and adopt more of a partnership-based approach to significant new initiatives.	The Director-General, through the Director of UIS, will develop more partnerships for significant new initiatives.
7	**Challenges**: With regard to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), the lack of progress in developing and finalizing the Operational Manual and guidelines is surprising given the importance attached by UIS to improving the international comparability of data and the need to support countries to align their national data with ISCED.	UIS should consider implementing a systematic process for assessing Member States' compliance with ISCED, to inform assessments of international comparability and to identify priorities for targeted capacity-building.	The Director-General, through the Director of UIS, will improve monitoring of compliance with ISCED.

	Findings and conclusions (continued)	Recommendations	Actions taken/to be taken by the Director-General
	Quality of interaction and coordination		
8	**Achievements**: Relations between UIS and non-UNESCO agencies are generally positive. UIS enjoys a very good reputation among the international statistical and development community for being responsive and professional.	UIS should consider opportunities for developing stronger relationships with other category one institutes, particularly, IIEP, to exploit complementary capacities and further the strategic and programmatic priorities of UNESCO.	The Director-General will establish a working group with representatives of the Category One Institutes to improve coordination between the institutes and consider how complementary capacities can be better exploited.
9	**Challenges**: High level of commitments undertaken to individual Member States represents a risk to the future reputation of UIS if they are unable to deliver to countries as promised, which puts a significant pressure on regional operations.	UIS should review its regional operations in consultation with regional staff, and assess the adequacy of current interaction and coordination between UIS Montreal and regional offices, in order to identify areas for increased collaboration and engagement. UIS needs to better define and reinforce the role of UIS Regional Advisers and their role should extend to covering all UIS core functions, not just capacity-building.	The Director-General, through the Director of UIS, will review the regional operations of UIS with a view to improving collaboration and engagement between UIS Montreal and the regional offices. In this context, the role of UIS Regional Adviser will be reviewed.
	Governance and management		
10	**Achievements**: The governance of UIS is sound but there is now scope for the Governing Board to adopt a more active role in the setting of strategic priorities and directions for the Institute. It is important that the Board drive and challenge the Director to develop a coherent and appropriate medium-term strategy and plan.	UIS should investigate how it can make more and better use of informal means of communication to keep its Board Members informed about the activities of the Institute between annual sessions of the Board.	The Director-General, through the Director of UIS, will ensure that the recommendation will be discussed by the Governing Board at the next session.
11	**Achievements**: In terms of funding and financial management, the UIS has been successful in funding its growth through extrabudgetary funding. Indeed, the fundraising performance of UIS compares relatively favourably with other UNESCO institutes and centres.	UIS should improve mechanisms for establishing the full cost of extrabudgetary projects and systematically incorporate an appropriate allowance for overhead and technical infrastructure support as part of its project-based extrabudgetary funding agreements to ensure that the Institute's core funding is not used to subsidize such projects.	The Director-General, through the Director of UIS, will consider how to best establish the full costs of extrabudgetary projects and whether and how to incorporate an allowance for overhead and technical infrastructure.

	Findings and conclusions (continued)	Recommendations	Actions taken/to be taken by the Director-General
	Governance and management (continued)		
12	**Challenges**: The Board meets only once a year. This hampers its ability to engage with the Director and staff of the Institute on strategic matters. The Board's lack of Board activism in relation to strategic issues has flowed through to the lack of focus on strategic matters by the senior management of the Institute. Board meetings are not routinely attended by a UNESCO representative.	UNESCO and UIS should consider the provision of a one-day customized induction and governance training programme for new Board appointees to ensure they are equipped to fulfil their fiduciary and other duties. The UIS Board should consider making more active use of Board committees as a mechanism for improving the quality of engagement between the Board and the management of the Institute on matters of strategic importance. The Board, through the Policy and Planning Committee, should consider clarifying the expectations of the Board in relation to Board reporting, so that the future reporting of the Institute better matches the needs and expectations of the Board. Given the importance of the relationship between the Education Sector and UIS, the ADG Education (or his nominee) should attend Board meetings.	The Director-General, through the Director of UIS, will discuss with representatives of the Institute and the Board, how to make more active use of Board Committees to improve engagement between the Board and management of UIS. This discussion will also clarify Board expectations of reporting by the Institute. The Director-General is considering requesting the Assistant Director General – Education (or his/her nominee) to attend future meetings of the Board.
13	**Challenges**: Fundraising has been somewhat ad hoc and largely carried out at programme level rather than reflecting an organization-wide fundraising strategy. Consequently, some parts of the Institute have grown out of proportion to others. Furthermore, the reliance of the Institute on extrabudgetary funding leaves it vulnerable to an adverse shift in donor sentiment, particularly given its limited reserves. Given the narrowness of the present funding base, UIS needs to remain vigilant in its efforts to extend both the range and longevity of funding arrangements secured.	UIS needs to improve the diversity of its funding base by focusing on attracting multi-year general budgetary support as a first priority over one-off project-based funding.	The Director-General, through the Director of UIS, will seek to diversify the funding base of UIS with the priority on multi-year general budgetary support.

PART II – CONCLUDING REMARKS OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

6.   Lessons learned: The Director-General recognizes the critical importance of information in addressing major global issues within the context of the broader Millennium Development Goals. These two evaluations, covering an institute and a programme dealing with the availability of relevant data and information, revealed important achievements and challenges with implications for the planning and implementation of UNESCO's activities. A major point worth noting is the relevance of the work of both UIS and IFAP to the data and information needs of Member States. Both UIS and IFAP have been successful in promoting access to relevant data and information. However, both evaluations identify the need for improved strategies/strategic plans to further address Member States' data and information needs, and enhance access for all to information.

Proposed draft decision

7.   The Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

1.   Recalling 176 EX/Decision 28,

2.   Having examined document 177 EX/26 which summarizes the evaluation reports that have been presented,

3.   Taking note of the recommendations made by the evaluators as well as the report of the Director-General on the actions taken or to be taken to implement these recommendations,

4.   Invites the Director-General to implement in a timely manner recommendations which improve the programmes and services to which they relate, and to continue to improve the quality of evaluations by implementing the UNESCO Evaluation Strategy,

5.   Requests the Director-General to continue to report to the Executive Board on evaluations conducted on the Organization's programme activities, on the progress made in strengthening programme management, in the follow-up to evaluation recommendations for each programme evaluated, and in strengthening the quality of the evaluations undertaken and their impact on the management culture of the Organization.