Statement by
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UNICEF Executive Board
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Item 6: Global thematic evaluation (nutrition)

Check against delivery
Thank you Mr. President,

I am pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of Canada, Estonia, Germany, The Netherlands, Norway, the United States and my own country Ireland.

We very much welcome this meta-evaluation on nutrition and associated management response, in addition to the recent CMAM evaluation (discussed at the annual session) and the global thematic evaluation on UNICEF’s work to reduce stunting, scheduled for 2015. Nutrition is an area in which we have invested considerable funds and leadership and we look forward to continued engagement with UNICEF in the implementation of the new strategy for addressing child malnutrition.

UNICEF has played a key role in bringing increased attention and investment to nutrition globally. The conceptual framework developed by UNICEF in 1990 remains highly relevant and UNICEF is seen as a key partner for countries when developing policy, standards and programmes. It is important that UNICEF invests in evaluations such as these to ensure that the work it is doing is of the highest quality.

We welcome the increased attention to multi-sectoral approaches and inter-sectoral coordination and commend UNICEF’s engagement in the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement and the REACH (Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and Undernutrition) coordination mechanism.

We are concerned however that the evaluation identified several instances of programme design, weaknesses in understanding of causal factors and frequent absence of a coherent package of interventions. As a thought leader in this area, weak programme design by UNICEF can have a knock-on effect on national programmes.

We note that a number of observations in the evaluation related to weak programme sustainability; many related to investments in institutional capacity and reliance on external funding and procurement. The recent management response to the CMAM evaluation identified a need to reduce costs in this area, an issue which is echoed in this evaluation.
While a meta-evaluation is unable to comment on why weaknesses in data, design, technical assistance and coordination occur, we feel that one factor may be the short time-frame in which programmes are planned and funded. Investment in capacity and institutions takes time and there is a need for more longer-term funding for nutrition.

We very much welcome the recommendations and management response covering a stronger results-based management focus, more attention to learning from evaluations and increased focus on capacity building. In order to ensure sufficient implementation of the management response, it must be owned and followed up by the entire organization.

In this regard, we note from the evaluation that only 17% of the actions agreed through management responses to evaluations 2009-2013 had been completed within the agreed timeframe of one year. We would urge UNICEF to improve performance on response to evaluation findings in order to maximise learning and effectiveness.

We note that only 9 out of 49 evaluations covered humanitarian settings, in spite the high investment in this area, and that several countries with high burdens of under-nutrition have not conducted any evaluations of nutrition interventions in recent years. We further note that the number of evaluations conducted in the area of nutrition, according to the Evaluation Policy, is low compared to the over 100 countries where UNICEF has nutrition programmes.

We re-emphasise the need for UNICEF to closely monitor what is working in nutrition programming and what changes are needed to UNICEF’s approach. It may be useful to consider some further joint evaluations with other donors and government in these countries in order to share learning outside UNICEF.

Once again we commend UNICEF’s leadership on nutrition and we look forward to continued engagement with you on this important area of work.

Thank you