



Consultation on

“Working in partnership with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). New DFID institutional strategy 2009/10 – 2011/12”

Joint Submission by BOND Members

About BOND

BOND (British Overseas NGOs for Development) is the UK membership body for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in international development. Established in 1993, BOND now has over 340 member organisations, from large organisations with a world-wide presence to smaller, more specialist organisations working in specific regions or with specific groups of people.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. BOND members welcome this opportunity to contribute to the current consultation on a new strategy for DFID’s work with UNICEF. As the biggest children’s fund worldwide UNICEF has a major role to play in the areas of health, education and child rights. We welcome the fact that DFID is planning a specific strategy to strengthen its work with UNICEF. As one of the biggest donors to UNICEF, we believe that DFID has a great responsibility in ensuring that UNICEF is spending its funds effectively so as to have the greatest positive impact on children’s lives.
- 1.2. We welcome the planned performance framework to monitor the work of UNICEF more closely. However, it should not only focus on short term outputs as development is a process. Also, it needs to be ensured that the indicators are the right ones and reflect the realities and needs on the ground.
- 1.3. *We believe that a new strategy for UNICEF needs to be based on the following major areas which will need to be included in the performance framework:*
 - *Promoting policy dialogue and cooperation with civil society*
 - *Promoting child rights and protection of marginalised children*
 - *Increasing collaboration, coherence and harmonisation efforts*

2. Policy dialogue and cooperation with civil society

Policy dialogue at a national and UK level

- 2.1. Policy dialogue between governments, international bodies such as UNICEF and civil society organisations is very important to improve accountability at a national and international level. As NGOs working in developing countries, we are also convinced that we can contribute important expertise to this policy dialogue.
- 2.2. DFID has a long history of engaging with civil society and we appreciate that. However, in the context of child rights, civil society consultations at country level are rare and need to be increased. Therefore, we would welcome more

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opportunities for a dialogue at country level including local NGOs, UNICEF and DFID's country programmes.

- 2.3. We are aware that UNICEF's work is already monitored closely and would like to suggest establishing mechanisms between UK NGOs and DFID to feedback on UNICEF's performance and effectiveness. These mechanisms for collaboration and communication should also cover the planned annual review by DFID of the indicators within the performance framework. Due to recent cuts in personnel at DFID's headquarters, it has been very difficult to engage in an expert dialogue on issues such as child protection or child health.

UNICEF to work more closely with civil society and communities

- 2.4. In the past, DFID support for UNICEF has not necessarily trickled down to civil society support at a country level. We would therefore recommend for UNICEF to strengthen its ties with local and international NGOs working on the ground.
- 2.5. With increasing amounts of money being channelled through budget support or sector wide approaches (SWAPs), there is a real need for powerful international organisations such as UNICEF to promote the voices of civil society and the real issues of children and mothers in Africa. UNICEF has a strong advocacy role ensuring that child policies are adequately reflected in national policies and should work closely with civil society to achieve that.
- 2.6. At a country level, UNICEF is often seen as having an insular approach to issues acting in competition with other civil society organisations. We would welcome less of a focus on 'branding' and more of a focus on cross-organisational working with civil society.
- 2.7. UNICEF could do more to support community engagement and structures at the community level. This is important as many donors are forgetting about the importance of community participation.

3. Child rights and protecting marginalised children

Promoting child rights

- 3.1. DFID needs to give greater support to, and learn from, UNICEF's work on child rights and monitoring of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In relation to child protection, DFID could encourage the implementation of the recommendations of UNICEF's Study on Violence against Children (2006).
- 3.2. The imminent appointment of a Special Representative to the Secretary General on Violence against Children is one of the most important steps forward in the protection of children in recent history. It is very important that this new post, and its associated office, is structured and managed in as independent and transparent manner as possible. It is important that UNICEF includes civil society, in particular the NGO Advisory Council, in the design and implementation of the work of the new Special Representative to the Secretary General and facilitates consultation at every opportunity.
- 3.3. DFID needs to assist UNICEF in addressing the most urgent gaps in globally-accessible knowledge about child rights and child rights programming:
 - *The development of child rights indicators to monitor implementation of the UNCRC* (UNICEF and Save the Children UK have worked on

universal frameworks which allow for the design of country-specific indicators, but far more is needed on this). There is also a need to link human rights and child rights work more effectively in line with the emerging governance and accountability agenda;

- *Better understanding of the relationship between universal rights (as codified in the UNCRC) and local diversity/contexts* and between rights-in-theory (law) and rights-in-practice in different countries;
- *Greater attention to the range of rights enshrined in the UNCRC*: To date there has been uneven coverage of different sets of rights in part due to the particular emphasis on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). But given a growing recognition that childhood poverty necessitates a holistic or integrated policy approach, inter-linkages between rights should be more systematically addressed;
- *Greater understanding of the political, institutional and ideological obstacles to the implementation of the UNCRC*; and better documentation and analysis of successful strategies to overcome these;
- *Developing minimum standards for child-rights programming and child protection*. Agencies working for and with children have a responsibility to make their operations safe for the children they are in contact with. DFID should work closely with UNICEF to support organisations and UN agencies to address protection challenges more effectively, by promoting organisational child protection policies and procedures by offering training and resources;
- *Rigorous evaluation that can inform guidance on good practice for different components of child rights-based approaches* (e.g. child protection; children; participation and governance; service delivery; inclusion; best interests, and so on) and applying them nationally rather than just locally;
- *Linking child rights work more purposively into other adult-focused work around governance and accountability* and addressing the questions: How can the voice of children be more effectively amplified to ensure that their rights are met? How can child rights activists learn from and link to women's rights agencies and institutions?
- *UNICEF is in a unique position to raise awareness and campaign on children's rights at the national and international level*. At the grass roots level UNICEF should be encouraged to learn from, work more closely with, and where appropriate, take the lead from local (community) organisations that are acutely aware of the realities on the ground, and often are more accountable than their governments.

Protecting marginalised children

3.4. DFID and UNICEF must pay particular attention to marginalised and vulnerable children (including children affected by HIV and AIDS, working children, street children and children with disabilities) and ensure that their rights and needs are included in all aspects of UNICEF's work.

3.5. As UNICEF takes the lead on Universal Primary Education (UPE) in a number of countries it is critical that their efforts in leadership to reach UPE have a clear focus on the inclusion of all marginalised and vulnerable children. The Fast Track Initiative (FTI) is developing an Inclusion Tool which should be used by

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UNICEF and all stakeholders in education sector plans and reviews to ensure sound strategies for inclusion.

- 3.6. In its dialogue with UNICEF, we urge DFID to recognise disability as a cross-cutting issue, allied to the focus on human rights, and to support both mainstreaming of disability throughout UNICEF's programmes and specific programmes targeted at disabled children.
- 3.7. In relation to this, UNICEF has commitments to supporting disabled children in its MTSP, and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) places an obligation on donors to ensure their international co-operation includes disabled people. Particular areas for action should include community-based rehabilitation and early intervention for disabled children, participation of disabled children and their families in policy making, and inclusive education systems.
- 3.8. As a key player in education, UNICEF could really make a difference for the one third of out of school children who are disabled. DFID should include an indicator on disabled children in its performance framework as an incentive to encourage UNICEF to meet its own commitments and strengthen its action on disability, and to ensure that DFID's support to UNICEF supports UK obligations under the CRPD.

4. Collaboration, coherence and harmonisation

- 4.1. DFID has played a progressive role in international negotiations on aid effectiveness, as we have seen most recently in Accra. However, it needs to be ensured that commitments made in the Paris Declaration, on EU level and in Accra are translated into practical outcomes. In regard to UNICEF, questions around alignment to country priorities and harmonisation are of utmost relevance and need to be addressed, as do DFID's commitments on predictable aid.
- 4.2. In relation to this, there has been a transitional financing gap between emergencies and development which needs to be considered in this new strategy as this has a strong impact on predictable financing.
- 4.3. As UNICEF is playing a cross sectoral role, DFID's new strategy needs to focus on coherence across the sectors, particularly around health, social protection, education and water and sanitation which is currently not given enough attention in most countries. UNICEF also needs to harmonise much more with other UN bodies and other donors at a country level.

The following organisations have contributed and endorsed this submission:

AMREF UK
BOND
ChildHope UK
Consortium for Street Children
Leonard Cheshire Disability
Save the Children UK
Sightsavers International
World Vision UK