



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
29 July 2004

Original: English

For information

United Nations Children's Fund

Executive Board

Second regular session 2004

13-17 September 2004

Item 11 on the provisional agenda*

Update on developments in human resources

Summary

This report is a follow-up to the oral presentation on human resources (HR) given to the Executive Board at its Annual Session, in June 2003. The report provides up-to-date information on the composition and structure of UNICEF staff and summarizes HR in the context of inter-agency collaboration and the United Nations reform. An update is presented on the UNICEF human resources strategy, including the Brasilia Human Resources Change Plan and the introduction of a new Human Resources Management System. Major HR challenges are noted.

* E/ICEF/2004/12.

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I. Introduction

1. This report is a follow-up to the oral presentation on human resources (HR) given to the Executive Board at its annual session, in June 2003. The report presents an up-to-date picture of HR and deals with strategic initiatives aimed at ensuring that the organization has the human resources it needs to: (a) achieve targets of the medium-term strategic plan (MTSP), (b) effectively contribute to building *A World Fit for Children*, and (c) fulfil its mandate to help to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

2. Section II covers the composition and structure of UNICEF staff, presenting data on the three broad categories: International Professional officer (IPO); National Professional officer (NPO); and General Service (GS). Distribution of staff is also broken down by contractual status (regular or temporary), grade, gender, region, nationality (categorized as industrialized or programme country), age, and projected year of retirement. Section III describes HR in the context of inter-agency collaboration and the United Nations reform process. Section IV provides an update on the UNICEF human resources strategy, notably the Brasilia Human Resources Change Plan (HRCP) and a new Human Resources Management System (HRMS) to simplify and integrate HR transactions and ensure that the organization has the staff required to execute its mandate. Major HR challenges are noted in Section V, and a summary and conclusion are presented in Section VI.

II. Composition and structure of UNICEF staff

A. Total number of staff by category and contractual status

3. UNICEF has 8,311 staff members (see Table 1), according to May 2004 data. IPOs make up about 23 per cent (1,938), including 110 Junior Professional Officers (JPOs). NPOs account for 21 per cent (1,744), while the remaining 56 per cent (4,629) are in the GS, or support staff category. Overall, 1,874, or about 23 per cent, hold temporary fixed-term (TFT) contracts, while 77 per cent are on regular contracts, both fixed-term and permanent. The TFT and regular contract percentages are similar among NPOs, 24 per cent of whom have TFTs, and among GS staff, 26 per cent of whom have TFTs. Among IPOs, 13 per cent hold temporary contracts, roughly half of the percentage of NPOs and GS staff with temporary contracts.

Table 1. Distribution of staff by category and contractual status, May 2004

CATEGORY	CONTRACTUAL STATUS		TOTAL
	REGULAR	TEMPORARY FIXED-TERM	
IPOs	1,688*	250	1,938 (23%)
NPOs	1,333	411	1,744 (21%)
GS	3,416	1,213	4,629 (56%)
TOTAL	6,437 (77%)	1,874 (23%)	8,311 (100%)

* Includes 110 Junior Professional Officers

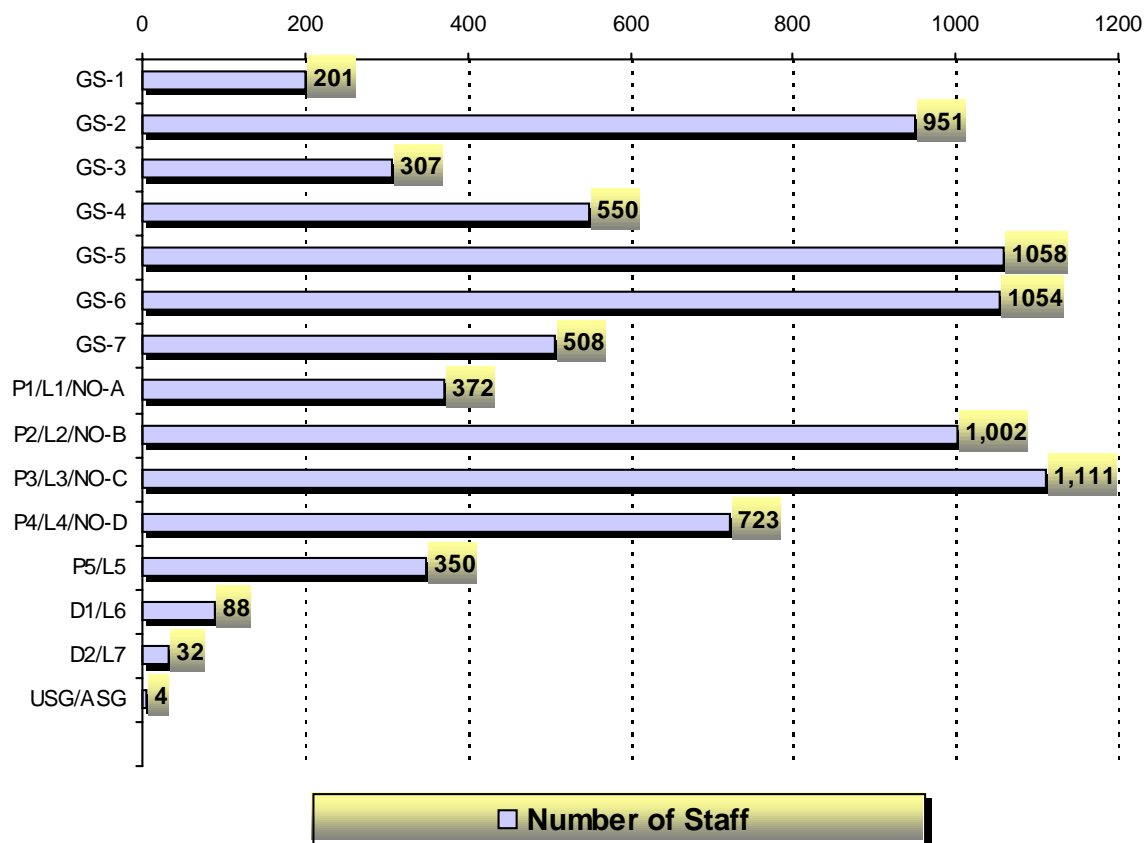
4. The current number of UNICEF staff represents an increase of 86 per cent over the end- 1990 figure of 4,489. By the end of 1995, the total number of staff had reached 7,511 and remained above 7,000 for much of the late 1990s and up until 2001. The number had risen to 8,083 by the end of 2002, to 8,157 by December 2003, and to 8,311 by May 2004. According to the latest available comparable data for the United Nations system, UNICEF staff in June 2003 constituted about 22 per cent of all staff in the “United Nations Secretariat and other entities”, according to the Secretary-General’s report, “Composition of the Secretariat”. At that point, UNICEF staff numbered 8,488 (this figure fell to 8,157 in December 2003 largely because of staff reductions due to the end of the Oil for Food programme and the shift into more regular programming in Afghanistan). By comparison, the Secretariat staff represented 40 per cent of the total staff; the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees slightly more than 17 per cent; the United Nations Development Programme a little under 14 per cent; and other agencies nearly 7 per cent. The UNICEF increase in staff over the years corresponds to an escalation of challenges confronting children and women globally, including the emergence of new challenges such as HIV/AIDS, and an increase in the number and complexity of humanitarian crises. (For a comparison of the number of staff and organizational income, see the annex.)

B. Staffing structure

5. Figure I provides data on the staffing structure in UNICEF. Data on Professional staff, shown in the figure below, indicate that an overwhelming majority (77 per cent) of staff are at the P2/L2/NO-B, P3/L3/NO-C and the P4/L4/NO-D levels. Thus, the structure of Professional staffing is one with a relatively narrow base, a broad middle, and a small peak. This distribution is in line

with the field-based operations of UNICEF and the decentralized mandate given to the organization by the Executive Board. In the General Service category, there is also a large grouping (58 per cent) at the middle GS-4, GS-5 and GS-6 levels.

Figure I. Number of staff by level, May 2004



C. Gender representation

6. UNICEF is committed to gender balance in the workplace. A 1985 policy to achieve 33-per-cent female representation by 1990 was realized. A follow-up policy, in line with United Nations standards, set a target of gender parity by the year 2000. Data in table 2 indicate that considerable progress has been made toward this goal. Female staff members now constitute 47 per cent of the UNICEF workforce. They make up 47 per cent of IPOs, 45 per cent of NPOs and 49 per cent of GS staff. These percentages represent significant gains by comparison with the mid-1980s, when only 27 per cent of Professional staff members were female. In overall gender balance, UNICEF ranks among the top three agencies, alongside the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. UNICEF is number one at the senior management level in the United Nations system, with approximately 35-per-cent female representation. The data

also show a steady growth since the 1980s in the percentage of female Professional staff.

7. Though UNICEF leads the United Nations in progress towards achieving gender balance at the senior management level, several challenges in this area are receiving attention. The near gender parity achieved for all staff in the broad IPO, NPO, and GS categories is not replicated at senior management levels. Among IPOs, there is virtual parity at the P1/L1/NO-A and P2/L2/NO-B levels, but from the P3/L3/NO-C level upwards, women are outnumbered by men. At each of the D1/L6 and D2/L7 senior managerial levels, women are outnumbered three to one.

8. These and other data indicate that the current challenge is not confined to recruiting more women or recruiting at entry levels, where women now dominate in some areas. The challenge is broadened to include retaining women as they move up the corporate ladder and, where significant female attrition exists, taking action to attract and retain female staff. Action is needed, therefore, not only to recruit female staff to UNICEF but to ensure they stay with the organization. Several ongoing policies hold promise for continued narrowing of the gender gap at senior and managerial levels. These include the practice of appointing male external candidates to posts only if qualified females are unavailable and the requirement of including at least two qualified female candidates on shortlists for posts. Targeted recruitment, deployments, appointments, women's leadership programmes, and work-life policies are also helping in this regard. These measures have, for instance, helped to improve the female proportion among UNICEF Representatives from 29 per cent in 1995 to 42 per cent in 2004. Actions are continually being taken to ensure the consistent application of these measures and the effective monitoring of gender balance.

Table 2. Number and percentage of staff by category and gender, May 2004

Category	Gender		Total
	Female	Male	
IPOs	903 (47%)	1,035 (53%)	1,938 (100%)
NPOs	777 (45%)	967 (55%)	1,744 (100%)
GS	2,249 (49%)	2,380 (51%)	4,629 (100%)
TOTAL	3,929 (47%)	4,382 (53%)	8,311 (100%)

D. Regional distribution

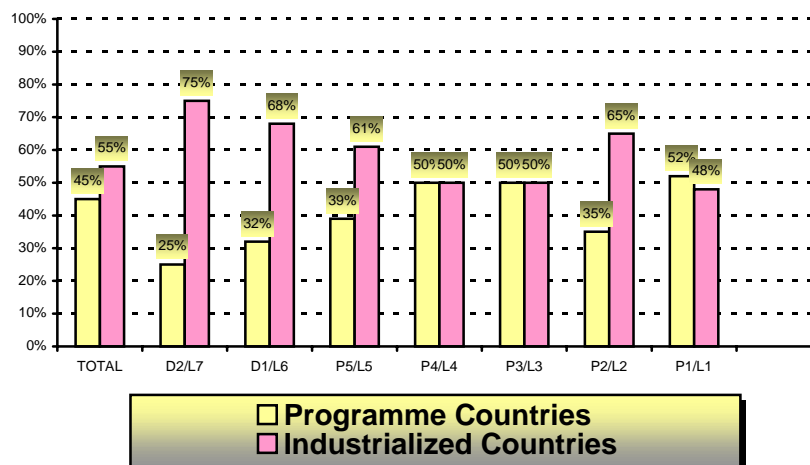
9. Eighty-five per cent (7,079) of the 8,311 UNICEF staff work in the field at the regional and country office levels, while 15 per cent (1,232) work in headquarters locations. Staff who work in the field are distributed across the regions as follows (the percentages are in relation to all staff):

Eastern and Southern Africa	19 per cent (1,573)
West and Central Africa	19 per cent (1,542)
South Asia	15 per cent (1,248)
Middle East and North Africa	10 per cent (801)
East Asia and Pacific	9 per cent (768)
The Americas and Caribbean	8 per cent (678)
Central and Eastern Europe, Commonwealth of Independent States and the Balkan States	6 per cent (469)

E. Representation of industrialized/programme countries among international Professional staff

10. The proportion of UNICEF IPOs from industrialized countries is 55 per cent, and from programme countries 45 per cent, with disparities evident at senior levels. Improving diversity in this area at all levels is an important work in progress.

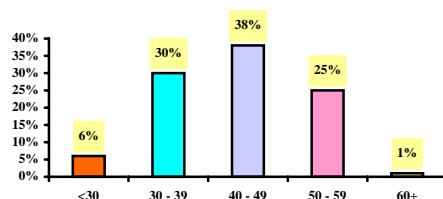
Figure II. Percentage of IPOs by industrialized/programme country (nationality) and level, May 2004



F. Age structure

11. The 40-49 age bracket is the single largest age group in UNICEF, at 38 per cent of staff. It is followed by the 30-39 age bracket (30 per cent of staff) and the 50-59 group (25 per cent of staff). Staff members under 30 years old make up 6 per cent of the workforce, and those aged 60 and above make up 1 per cent. With 26 per cent of all staff members aged 50 and above, an HR challenge is the replacement of staff as they reach retirement age and leave the organization.

Figure III. Age distribution of all staff, May 2004



G. Projected retirements, 2004 to 2008

12. A group of 609 staff members (7 per cent of staff) will reach mandatory retirement age within the next five years. Of these, 84 will retire this year, while others will retire in 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008 in the following respective numbers: 109, 99, 147, and 170. These numbers point to a progressive increase in the number of retirees. Over the next five years, these retirees are expected to include 51 senior managers, defined as Representatives and D1 and D2 level staff, including Directors and Deputy Directors, among others. Considering that some staff older than 55 but below the mandatory retirement age may elect to take early retirement, the number of those retiring may actually be higher than expected.

13. Awareness of the increasing challenge of replacing retiring staff led to the development of a succession management system to ensure that managers and other retiring staff are replaced in a timely manner to promote the highest possible level of continuity in management and programme implementation. Key elements of the new succession management system are outlined in paragraph 24.

III. Inter-agency collaboration

14. UNICEF collaboration with United Nations agencies on HR matters and the organization's participation in the reform process have provided opportunities for advocacy on critical issues, for engagement in decision-making, and for information-sharing. The UNICEF HR strategy is continually evolving to reflect harmonization and stronger linkages to the United Nations change management process.

15. Over the past two years, discussions, agreements, and mandates from the United Nations System Chief Executives Board (CEB) for Coordination, the High Level Committee on Management, and other inter-agency governance bodies and working groups have focused on promoting a more integrated United Nations with simplified approaches to management in general and HR in particular. Some of the major areas covered are common services, harmonization of HR policies and procedures, reform of pay and benefits, response to the challenge of HIV/AIDS in the workplace, improved inter-agency mobility, staff learning and development, and sexual harassment and abuse of authority.

16. UNICEF is participating in pilot programmes for common services in Cape Verde and Maldives and has started to work with other agencies to anticipate and plan for some of the implications of these measures, including process re-engineering that may be called for. In the working group on harmonization of HR policies and procedures, common policies have been developed on staff security and conditions of service in difficult duty stations. Ongoing inter-agency action to reform the pay and benefits system is being considered in the development of a new performance management system for UNICEF. Attention is being paid to ensuring that results in the new system are measurable and fully compatible with a pay-for-performance system. A comprehensive policy on HIV/AIDS in the workplace is also being implemented and has served as a good model for the United Nations system as a whole.

17. To support information about the sharing of vacancies among participating agencies, UNICEF collaborated with the United Nations Development Programme, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Office for Project Services and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS in launching the Participating Agencies Mobility System internal vacancy web site, an important tool in these efforts. At least 200 posts have been advertised on the web site. UNICEF is also working with United Nations system partners to implement other measures outlined by the CEB to enhance staff mobility, including spouse employment. Since 1998, the organization has proposed 25 UNICEF candidates (14 females and 11 males) for the United Nations Resident Coordinator system and is a major contributor (and less of a beneficiary from) secondments, especially at the senior levels. Currently, 4 UNICEF staff are Resident Coordinators, while 37 are on secondment and 27 are on reimbursable/non-reimbursable loan to other agencies. Eleven staff members are on secondment to UNICEF from other agencies.

18. Inter-agency coordination of learning activities has made it possible to pool resources for learning initiatives, especially in relation to the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). This pooling of resources promotes economy of scale, improves efficiency of resource utilization and at the same time builds critical capacity for work within the ambit of the UNDAF and CCA. The UNICEF experience in joint programming is also a major source of lessons learned and opportunities for the continued development of its human resources strategy.

19. UNICEF has been an active member of the global and New York headquarters Learning Managers Forum, spearheading inter-agency seminars on learning, as well as of other learning-focused bodies such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) task force on emergency training. Inter-agency collaboration has also contributed to the formulation of the "Core Principles for a Code of Conduct" on the

protection of women and children from sexual exploitation and abuse in humanitarian crises. Knowledge of the code is to be included as part of learning and development for emergency duty.

IV. Progress of initiatives within UNICEF

20. UNICEF is applying a two-pronged approach to its HR initiatives, concentrating on the formulation and development of strategies and policies to guide transactions as well as on the effective and efficient administration of staff members' conditions of service.

21. In the June 2003 HR oral report presented at the annual session of the Executive Board, it was noted that the Brasilia Human Resources Change Plan (HRCP) combines these two strands of HR in one framework. This section provides a brief summary of the ongoing implementation of HCRP and of a new Human Resources Management System (HRMS).

A. Update on the Brasilia Human Resources Change Plan

22. This update covers the five elements of the HRCP:

(a) Development and implementation of a corporate strategic HR planning process, including a model for succession management, and the planning for and promotion of gender, geographic, and ethnic balance;

(b) Improvement of the recruitment and placement processes to facilitate the placement of talented staff at the right place at the right time, based on clear competency profiles;

(c) Design and implementation of an effective career and staff development system having a career-counselling component linked to accessible outplacement services;

(d) Development of a new performance management system to support translation of MTSP goals/objectives and country priorities into an individual's goals and targets;

(e) Improvement of staff well-being, with special attention paid to work-life balance, stress management, HIV/AIDS in the workplace, and policies on emergencies, and staff safety and security.

Corporate strategic HR planning

23. The corporate strategic HR planning process is designed to provide an overarching and integrated system to complement MTSP planning. The aim is to ensure that HR needs-assessments in relation to the MTSP are completed, and actions taken, before MTSP implementation commences. The system is guided by a set of general principles and has a six-step process developed collaboratively among different functional areas of UNICEF. Implementation will begin after the mid-term review of the 2002-2005 MTSP, feeding into preparations for the next MTSP.

24. Succession management, another important area of the strategic HR planning process, involves a "pool" model developed to promote continuity in leadership and

other functions. The model is designed to ensure that pools of qualified candidates are continually being constituted and updated and that successors are named well ahead of the departure of incumbents. When fully resourced, the model will support early planning, continuous feedback, and capacity-development as key aspects of preparing staff for future responsibilities and roles. In addition, the assessment and selection of successors will take place through an assessment centre, thereby ensuring a more cohesive and structured approach. The succession management system will be adapted to, and implemented at, the regional and country office levels within the next biennium.

Recruitment and placement

25. Timely recruitment and deployment of staff for regular and emergency programme duties is perhaps the most challenging area for HR management in relation to the MTSP. Although the time it takes to complete recruitment is still longer than the three-month target set in the Brasilia HRCP, advances have been made in the building of structures, processes, and capacity required to get staff to the right place at the right time. Actions to improve response times as part of broader efforts to improve the recruitment process have achieved several notable results:

(a) Special recruitment campaigns were carried out for areas of the MTSP related to health and child protection, leading to the identification of 103 health candidates and 23 child protection candidates. In the MTSP priority areas for which special recruitment campaigns have not been carried out, efforts have been intensified to identify and interview good candidates.

(b) Competency profiles have been completed for all 22 professional-level functional areas related to the five MTSP priorities and all five strategies. The full complement of profiles is feeding into the development of job descriptions and is helping to identify candidates that better fit the requirements of the MTSP.

26. The new rotation policy introduced in 2001 is being implemented through an improved consultative process catalysing a periodic realistic assessment of capacity needs by various offices.

27. The humanitarian and emergency response capacity of UNICEF has been strengthened through the appointment of a Recruitment Officer specializing in emergency operations within the Division of Human Resources. This has helped emergency operations to be further mainstreamed into HR management in line with the principles of the MTSP, and as a result, the HR response to emergencies has become faster and more effective and efficient.

28. A Young Professionals Programme, launched with 16 participants in 2002, is providing a source of fresh talent for organizational renewal and a corps of individuals whose talents and competencies can be developed for future leadership and management roles in UNICEF. A second group of 20 young professionals had been appointed as of mid-2004. Both groups were placed in functional areas covering all five MTSP priorities and supporting functions such as fund-raising and HR management. In recruitment and placement for the programme, emphasis has been placed on ensuring adequate gender representation (60 per cent are women) and candidates' knowledge of at least a second United Nations language.

29. The overall strategy for learning and staff development under the MTSP emphasizes the continued importance of developing leadership and management capacity and improving access to opportunities for learning and development for staff members at all levels and locations. The strategy also promotes a more decentralized and enhanced approach that aligns learning needs with the challenges of the MTSP at the country, regional and headquarters levels. Furthermore, the strategy provides for a strong link between learning and other systems, such as performance management, and encourages the proper monitoring and evaluation of learning programmes, as well as the use of lessons learned, as stepping stones for further improvements.

30. Progress also continues to be made in other areas of learning and development:

(a) Training packages (including electronic modules) and rollout strategies on the programme process, emergency preparedness and response, humanitarian principles, and young people and HIV/AIDS were revised or updated to be better aligned with the MTSP and are already in use. Efforts are ongoing to develop learning materials for other MTSP priority areas.

(b) A new Professional and Personal Development (P2D) programme has been designed to leverage the tripartite relationship between an individual staff member, his or her supervisor, and UNICEF. P2D provides a framework for career management within the context of the MTSP and other organizational challenges. It is noteworthy that the programme received international recognition as a “best practice” at the 2003 International Career Development Conference.

Performance management

31. This remains an important challenge at UNICEF. An evaluation of the existing system found that there is a strong need to develop an organizational culture in which objectives-setting and feedback are fundamental to the performance review process. Learning programmes are, therefore, being implemented to build capacity in these areas. These efforts followed completion of a concept paper detailing a new system of performance management supporting the translation of MTSP goals/objectives and country priorities into an individual’s goals and targets and assessing performance against competencies and measurable results. The new system will also support the strengthening of staff capacity by feeding into the P2D programme and a complementary career-counselling programme.

Staff well-being

32. The Brasilia HRCP sees staff well-being as a key issue for UNICEF, both as a good employer and as an organization concerned with the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of its programmes and operations in achieving MTSP and other organizational targets. Interventions in this area aim to maintain a high level of staff well-being and avert untold costs in absenteeism, health complications, burnout, low morale and productivity, and a consequent high turnover in the organization. For example, a series of mutually reinforcing family-friendly and work-life balance policies and support mechanisms have been instituted, covering adoption, maternity and paternity leave, breastfeeding, spouse employment and flexible work schedules. Such policies encourage effective staff contribution to the achievement of organizational goals and objectives in a flexible way that emphasizes stress reduction, dedication to one’s work and job satisfaction.

33. Regarding the challenge of HIV/AIDS in the workplace, UNICEF has established “Minimum Standards” to foster achievement of the highest levels of response organization-wide. Implementation of these standards has been facilitated by the production of a tool kit and video as well as by the promotion of Caring for Us, a programme through which staff members determine the most critical challenges they face and seek ways to care for each other as a way of meeting these challenges. Structures for stress management are in place in three regions, and there is increased awareness of its importance.

34. Another important aspect of an environment conducive to productivity and job satisfaction is enhanced staff-management relations. For this reason, staff association representatives are members of various management teams and forums at global, regional and country office levels. Management encourages dialogue and collaboration with the global staff association, and periodic global Joint Consultative Committee meetings are held to discuss various staff issues.

B. Update on the Human Resources Management System

35. HRMS aims to provide UNICEF with a significantly more integrated and simplified approach to HR transactions and management. While the United Nations Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) currently in use provides UNICEF with an excellent personnel administration and payroll system, it does not support many other HR activities. The new system will, over and above personnel administration, help UNICEF to implement activities such as recruitment, career development, succession planning and performance management.

36. The first phase of the HRMS project, to be completed in March 2005, will replace current functions carried out through IMIS: organizational structure management, position management, placement, personnel administration, time and attendance management and payroll. The second phase will commence in 2005 with an evaluation of the feasibility of additional functionalities for the system, especially electronic recruitment (e-recruitment), position budgeting and control, performance management, career development, training and events management, and management of consultants hired through Special Service Agreements.

V. Challenges

37. A major lesson learned from the implementation of the current MTSP is that it needs to go hand-in-hand with a determination of the related HR challenges, including staffing requirements and learning needs. Before MTSP implementation begins, a comprehensive supporting HR plan, together with a work plan, should be in place, and some critical aspects of the plan under way. As noted above, a corporate strategic HR planning process linked to the MTSP cycle has been developed; the challenge now is to implement it.

38. Resources for HR initiatives, especially developmental activities, present a major challenge. Approval by the UNICEF Executive Board of additional resource mobilization through the other resources window may help to address this challenge, at least in part. It is hoped that some of these resources will be raised as soon as possible.

39. Another cross-cutting challenge is the strain on staff resources brought about by the need for a change management process to support the Brasilia HRCP and HRMS, with its demands on staff time.

VI. Summary and conclusion

40. This report has provided an update on the composition and structure of UNICEF staff. The distribution of staff reflects the field-based nature of the organization and shows that significant progress has been made in achieving gender diversity, though some challenges remain, especially at senior managerial levels. It was noted that the same challenges apply to achieving greater staff representation from programme countries. A projection of retirements to take place within the next five years (2004–2008) highlighted the need to find timely replacements for retiring staff in order to promote continuity in management and programme implementation.

41. A focused review of HR in the context of inter-agency collaboration and United Nations reform showed that UNICEF is an active participant in the collaborative and reform processes. Notable contributions of the organization to these efforts — and the benefits derived from them — relate especially to learning and development, joint programming through the CCA and UNDAF mechanisms, the United Nations Resident Coordinator system, policy harmonization and inter-agency staff secondments and loans, for which UNICEF is a net contributor. Advances made on implementation of all five pillars of the Brasilia HRCP and a new HRMS to simplify and integrate HR transactions were noted.

42. The conclusion to be drawn from this report is that HR management in UNICEF is undergoing a welcome and significant shift from being a personnel- and benefits-driven enterprise to being a strategic management undertaking focused on ensuring that the organization has the human resources it needs to execute its mandate. UNICEF has committed itself to an initiative to address its HR challenges through the Brasilia HRCP. The priority now is to ensure that the goals of the HRCP are realized through the development of a stronger action plan based on substantive reviews/re-examinations and the establishment of realistic benchmarks and monitoring systems that will guide HR management in the short, medium and longer term. These efforts need to be supported with more funding for HR (to be addressed through the biennium budget process and fund-raising) and better change management, including improved accountability at all levels in overseeing the process.

Annex

Number of staff compared with organizational income, 1980 to 2003