

Afghanistan

Mid-Term Evaluation

**Thematic window: Children, Food security
& Nutrition**

**Programme Title: Feeding the Children of Afghanistan
Together**

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Prologue

The current mid-term evaluation report is part of the efforts being implemented by the Millennium Development Goal Secretariat (MDG-F), as part of its monitoring and evaluation strategy, to promote learning and to improve the quality of the 128 joint programs in 8 development thematic windows according to the basic evaluation criteria inherent to evaluation; relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability.

The aforementioned mid-term evaluations have been carried out amidst the backdrop of an institutional context that is both rich and varied, and where several UN organizations, working hand in hand with governmental agencies and civil society, cooperate in an attempt to achieve priority development objectives at the local, regional, and national levels. Thus the mid-term evaluations have been conducted in line with the principles outlined in the Evaluation network of the Development Assistant Committee (DAC) - as well as those of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). In this respect, the evaluation process included a reference group comprising the main stakeholders involved in the joint programme, who were active participants in decisions making during all stages of the evaluation; design, implementation, dissemination and improvement phase.

The analysis contained in the mid-term evaluation focuses on the joint program at its mid-term point of implementation- approximately 18 months after it was launched. Bearing in mind the limited time period for implementation of the programs (3 years at most), the mid-term evaluations have been devised to serve as short-term evaluation exercises. This has limited the scope and depth of the evaluation in comparison to a more standard evaluation exercise that would take much longer time and resources to be conducted. Yet it is clearly focusing on the utility and use of the evaluation as a learning tool to improve the joint programs and widely disseminating lessons learnt.

This exercise is both a first opportunity to constitute an independent “snapshot” of progress made and the challenges posed by initiatives of this nature as regards the 3 objectives being pursued by the MDG-F; the change in living conditions for the various populations vis-à-vis the Millennium Development Goals, the improved quality in terms of assistance provided in line with the terms and conditions outlined by the Declaration of Paris as well as progress made regarding the reform of the United Nations system following the “Delivering as One” initiative.

As a direct result of such mid-term evaluation processes, plans aimed at improving each joint program have been drafted and as such, the recommendations contained in the report have now become specific initiatives, seeking to improve upon implementation of all joint programs evaluated, which are closely monitored by the MDG-F Secretariat.

Conscious of the individual and collective efforts deployed to successfully perform this mid-term evaluation, we would like to thank all partners involved and to dedicate this current document to all those who have contributed to the drafting of the same and who have helped it become a reality (members of the reference group, the teams comprising the governmental agencies, the joint program team, consultants, beneficiaries, local authorities, the team from the Secretariat as well as a wide range of institutions and individuals from the public and private sectors). Once again, our heartfelt thanks.

The analysis and recommendations of this evaluation report do not necessarily reflect the views of the MDG-F Secretariat.

Children, Nutrition and Food Security in Afghanistan

Mid Term Evaluation Report

Prepared for:

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/

MDG Achievement Fund (MDG-F)

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List of Abbreviations Used

ANDS	Afghan National Development Strategy
BPHS	Basic Public Health Services
CDC	Community Development Counsel
CHW	Community Health Worker
CNFS	Children, Nutrition and Food Security in Afghanistan
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DCC	District Coordination Committee
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GM & P	Growth Monitoring and Promotion
GoA	Government of Afghanistan
IYCF	Infant and Young Children Feeding
JP	Joint Programme
JPTAC	Joint Programme Technical Advisor and Coordinator
KMU	Kabul Medical University
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MDG-F	Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
MOWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
MSAM	Management of Severe Acute Malnutrition
MTE	Mid Term Evaluation
MUAC	Mid-Upper Arm Circumference
PCC	Provincial Coordination Committee
PNO	Provincial Nutrition Officer
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition
U5's	Children under the age of five years old
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

Children, Nutrition and Food Security in Afghanistan (CNFS) is a three-year, multi-agency project that is funded through the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F). Its primary aim is to deliver a comprehensive package of community nutrition and food security interventions, while strengthening the institutional framework for addressing malnutrition and chronic food security issues in an integrated manner.

This mid-term evaluation was conducted in September-October 2011, with an in-country mission from 21-30 September, covering the first 18 months of implementation from January 2010-June 2011. While the project started late and quantitative progress by the end of the evaluation period is behind schedule, several very positive developments inspire optimism that the project will meet or even exceed the stated reach of the project document. Some of the main observations can be grouped in the following areas:

- 1) **Government Ownership:** A very high degree of government ownership and engagement was witnessed during the evaluation mission, both at the national and subnational level. The project team is well known to relevant government staff in all of the ministries visited, and many project activities are being prioritized, implemented an/or monitored by provincial or district based government staff.
- 2) **Coherence of Project Interventions:** Activities conducted by individual agencies mirror the activities each routinely undertakes; it is not joint implementation as much as parallel implementation.
- 3) **Operational Issues:** Funding transfers to partner agencies has been somewhat problematic; most have spent their initial allocation and have been waiting a long time for the whole project to reach the 70% threshold. A more integrated approach that might be taken for budget management is discussed in this report
- 4) **Interagency Coordination:** Formal coordination mechanisms are well utilized, and 3 of 4 partner agencies have a full time, CNFS funded staff working on the project. Revised reporting lines for these staff that connect them more directly to the JP Team may help to promote more consistent and effective agency engagement.
- 5) **Progress in partnership with the education sector:** Excellent progress has been made by working with the MoE to integrate a nutrition component in the national primary education curriculum, and with facilitating partnerships with Kabul Medical University and other educational institutions.

A summary of conclusions and recommendations are as follows:

	Conclusions	Recommendations
1.	Significant resources have been put into the collection of data (baseline survey, BPHS mapping and MUAC screening), which is positive and should allow for better targeting during the latter half of the project.	This information should not only be used to inform nutrition and FS interventions, but as the basis for advocacy, genuine joint planning and possibly resource mobilization.
2.	Contract awards through the joint fund have been limited (financially) to fall within FAO's in-country procurement delegation levels, due in part to a desire to get activities started quickly to compensate for the late start. However, this artificially determines the size of contract, promoting resource allocation based on arbitrary dollar amounts rather than scoping each intervention based on comparative needs.	Future activities will be informed by the baseline data being collected, and contracting should be done on a needs basis, even if this represents a longer contracting process. This will also allow for a move away from the current propensity towards quick impact projects, which by their nature are geared towards quick gains rather than sustainable impact.
3.	Inclusion of nutrition education in the national elementary school curriculum is a substantive achievement of the project to date, and should be built upon.	Capacity building of teachers might be expanded as a very limited number of Kabul-based teachers received training during the process of developing the curriculum. A training roll out that would reach provincially and district-based teachers could substantially increase the impact of the revised curriculum. This may be done through existing teacher training channels, such as UNICEF training on the use of iodized salt.
3.1.	See above.	Similar curriculum revisions or supplementation should be supported for grades beyond 1-6 to the degree possible.
4.	Advocacy of the broader MDG agenda, and the joint efforts of UN agencies in addressing nutrition and food security, has not been done in a concerted fashion.	An advocacy strategy should be articulated among partner agencies to identify key opportunities and forums for communicating the criticality of linking nutrition and food security strategies. Where possible this should be fact based, using data collected through the project and

		communicating the benefits of a harmonized approach. The MDG-F guidance note should inform the advocacy strategy.
5.	One layer of monitoring is made possible by the decision of the project to have one partner agency as the focal point for each of the 5 provinces, based partly on that agency's existing presence in the province. If there is good agency commitment to this, it could help mitigate a significant risk by reducing the difficulty in project monitoring posed by travel restrictions in Afghanistan.	Discussions with partner agencies should clarify if their field based staff (in their assigned province) can be made available for this role of overseeing project activities, even those that are not implemented by them directly. This should be realistic and based on a clear outline of the scope and location of CNFS activities and the time required to provide monitoring support.
6.	Given the fact that all but one of the agencies have dedicated, funded positions under this project, there is scope for improvement in agency engagement if agencies are willing to clarify requirements for CNFS-funded staff to be accountable to the project directly.	Consideration should be given to a dual reporting line for staff funded through the CNFS, between the JPTAC and agency supervisor. This will help promote joint action and optimum communication.
7.	An excellent level of government engagement is present in the project, both at the national and subnational levels. Subnational coordination between ministries is very high.	The experiences of local coordination should be captured as a lesson learned, and ways sought to see how the integration can be furthered and used as a basis for further resource mobilization.
8.	An integrated approach by partner agencies is not as clearly seen as many activities are implemented in parallel without a definitive link between them. Each agency is doing its standard nutrition/food security activities in relative isolation, with a missing degree of joint planning and implementation that could make the whole greater than the sum of its parts.	Planning (post assessments) should be done with key project focal points/staff "locked in a room", looking for a coherent approach to dealing with the needs identified. Continuing with typical activities should not be seen as the default decisions; rather, the opportunity for some innovative, authentic joint planning should be seized.
9.	Technical training study tours, such as food preservation technologies, are being organized and spots given (in most cases)	A capacity development plan should be developed based on the experiences of study tours to date, with a clear rationale for why each

	to the subnational government staff that are actually giving or overseeing the trainings at the community level. Skills transfer is also made more plausible with the co-location of the project team in the counterpart ministries.	person/group is proposed to attend a particular training. This should include a plan for how these staff will share the knowledge with other upon their return. A balanced approach should be taken between trainings that serve the short-term goals of the project, with those that provide broader skill sets to relevant government partners.
10.	Attempts to harmonize reporting and monitoring systems of the main government partners (MoPH and MAIL), as proposed in the project document, have not been pursued to date. Given the timeframe of the project, the complexity of the task and the inherently project-centric justification to do so, not pursuing this was the correct choice.	In the absence of a harmonized reporting mechanism between concerned ministries, obtaining programmatic feedback and information should be obtained through the district/provincial coordination committees. This will allow for direct information gathering based on the data and reporting needs of the project.
11.	To be fully effective as a JP, a more integrated approach to budget management should be followed. The current budgetary allocations to each agency should not be seen as set in stone, or it will discourage a needs-based approach to effectively addressing the scope of the problem.	When planning activities based on the needs assessment, the budget should be viewed as flexible to determine how to allocate funds to best address shared objectives. FAO is not responsible to develop the entire pooled fund.
12.	Sustainability of project interventions will be somewhat limited by the scope of funding available. The project approach (high government ownership at central/local level, curriculum initiatives and selective capacity development efforts) contribute to sustainability, but the community interventions will be limited to demonstrations and small scale community support.	Once sufficient information is collected through assessments and interventions are further along, an impact assessment would be helpful to be able to credibly demonstrate the effectiveness of the approach. This could be used as a basis for further resource mobilization to expand community level interventions.

Introduction

Programme Environment and Context

1. Afghanistan has the third highest child mortality rate in the world, as well as the second highest maternal mortality rate. It is estimated that 327,000 children under 5 (U5) die each year.
2. Studies estimate that 35-56% of U5 deaths (globally) can be attributed to malnutrition. Of these, 83% of deaths are of children that suffer from mild-moderate malnutrition due to a decreased defense against infection, while only 10% are categorized as acutely malnutrition. Therefore, many of the U5 deaths could be prevented with enhanced nutritional intervention.
3. Chronic malnutrition rates in Afghanistan are estimated at 45-60% of the population, with acute malnutrition affecting 6-10%. There are indications that acute malnutrition rates may be rising, due in part to rising food prices, drought and a particularly harsh winter in 2007-2008 which had serious implications for agricultural and livestock sectors. The JP team reports that 45% of U5 children in the target areas are consuming less than their minimum requirements.
4. Micronutrient deficiency rates are very high amongst both children and women, with 72 and 48%, respectively, being iron deficient; 50% of U5 children having zinc deficiencies; and approximately three quarters of U5s and women of reproductive ages lacking iodine. Vitamin deficiencies, such as A and C, are also widespread.
5. Maternal undernutrition is highly prevalent in many areas of the country, 'perpetuating an inter-generational cycle of under nutrition'.
6. Household food insecurity is caused by a variety of factors, including *inter alia* a drastic increase in food prices since 2007, a devastatingly harsh winter in 2007/2008, frequent droughts, inadequate production of staple crops, limited storage and processing capacity for agricultural products, high unemployment and a general surge in the overall cost of living.
7. Infant and young children feeding (IYCF) practices are often poor. Traditional and cultural beliefs can have negative effects on how young children are nourished; breastfeeding is shunned or stopped earlier than optimal; children are weaned at inappropriate ages; and complimentary foods are often inadequate or inappropriate for the nutritional needs of young children. Maternal undernutrition, a lack of support and limited resources, and a

mother's workload all contribute to poor IYCF practices. It's estimated that one third of children are growth stunted by the age of twelve months.

8. Many of the most common causes of death for U5's can be linked to undernutrition, evidenced by the manner in which poor nutrition patterns mirror disease rates. Poor hygiene and sanitation practices, and limited access to improved water, also contribute substantially.
9. The Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) is the Government of Afghanistan's main strategic planning document, and it addresses nutrition and food security through the "Nutrition Sector Strategy" and the "Agriculture and Rural Development Sector Strategy". However, it is vague in tackling the causes and proposed solutions of undernutrition and household food security, and both political commitment and resource allocation have remained somewhat limited.
10. The main guiding document for nutritional interventions since 2003 is the Public Nutrition Policy and Strategy for 2003-2006. There are efforts underway to update this in an effective manner.
11. Coordination efforts over the past decade have been sporadic with limited integration of health and food security interventions, with the former getting priority and tending to focus on health centers rather than community-level efforts.
12. There is a new willingness to prioritize agriculture, possibly fuelled by the food crisis of 2008. The Agricultural Task Force deals with medium and long-term programmes, while the Food Security and Nutrition Clusters focus on integrated action for emergency response.

Children, Nutrition and Food Security in Afghanistan

13. The Joint Programme "Children, Nutrition and Food Security in Afghanistan" (CNFS) aims to support all three pillars of the 2010-2013 UNDAF, namely "Governance, Peace and Stability", "Sustainable Livelihoods: Agriculture, food security and access to income", and "Basic Services Delivery: Health, Education and Water and Sanitation". It seeks to contribute to five of the MDG's, namely MDG1 (Poverty and Hunger), MDG2 (Education), MDG4 (Child Health), MDG5 (Maternal Health) and MDG8 (Environment), focusing primarily on MDG1 and 4.
14. The JP identifies four main challenges to be addressed by the project, namely a) limited prioritization of nutrition in government policies and budgets; b) limited coverage and outreach in less accessible areas; c) limited coordination and integration of interventions in nutrition and food security; and d) limited in-country expertise in nutrition and food security interventions and all levels of government and civil society.

15. The JP organizes its efforts through two outcomes and 10 outputs.
16. Outcome 1 represents a comprehensive package of community nutrition and food security interventions to reduce the degree and prevalence of under nutrition at the district level. Seven outputs are identified covering:
- ✦ Participatory nutrition and food security assessments
 - ✦ Capacity development of community members on nutritional practices
 - ✦ Improved IYCF practices
 - ✦ Provision of food and medications and referrals to health services
 - ✦ Capacity development of health workers on nutritional issues and practices
 - ✦ Increasing household food production and income generation capacity
 - ✦ Nutritional status monitoring in project locations
17. The JP will work towards Outcome 1 by establishing the Nutrition and Food Security Support Fund, where potential partners (CSOs, NGOs, etc.) will prepare project proposals for funding consideration that contribute to one or more outputs in one or more target areas. The JP Team will jointly assess these and allocate funding to the most suitable proposals. Consideration will be given to the quality of proposal, experience and capacity of the organization, and the degree to which the projects work in an integrated fashion between outputs and/or between different partners. The NSC and the PMC will allocate these pooled funds, and contracts will be managed by FAO as the Management Agent.
18. The National Steering Committee (NSC) is responsible for the selection of provinces according the project document, but in the absence of such a body in Afghanistan the Project Management Committee (PMC) would fill this role. The selection of districts is done through consultation with government, partner agencies and UNAMA and ultimately validated by the PMC.
19. This Outcome will start with a baseline survey, be followed by proposal preparation and selection by the Support Fund, through project implementation and monitoring, and finished with an evaluation and lessons learned process.
20. Outcome 2 focuses on strengthening the policy frameworks and institutional mechanisms required to support integrated nutrition interventions, addressing undernutrition from a longer-term perspective. Within the three specific outputs under Outcome 2, the JP seeks to:
- ✦ Provide policy advice and advocacy for stronger, better resourced and more focused policies and strategies to address undernutrition and food security
 - ✦ Help establish effective coordination mechanisms for nutrition and food security interventions at the central and provincial levels

- ✦ Have nutrition and food security modules developed and integrated into pre-service and in-service trainings for health workers and other relevant personnel

21. Activities under Outcome 2 are focused at the central level, directly by the JP Team through the provision of capacity development and specific technical assistance. This includes embedding two National Coordinators within the two key partner ministries, as well as support provided by the JP Technical Advisor and Coordinator (JPTAC) and a nutrition and food security curriculum development specialist.
22. The JP was approved on 06 July 2009 by the MDG-F Steering Committee and signed by all partner agencies by 29 July 2009. The project budget is \$5,000,000 over a period of three years. The JP has FAO as a lead agency partnering with UNICEF, UNIDO, WFP and WHO, with the main government counterparts being the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), as well as substantial involvement of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD).
23. The first tranche of funds was received in December 2009, making the official start date of the project 23 December 2009.

Mid Term Evaluation

Objectives

This mid-term evaluation has the following **specific objectives**:

24. To discover the programme's **design quality and internal coherence** (needs and problems it seeks to solve) and its external coherence with the UNDAF, the National Development Strategies and the **Millennium Development Goals**, and find out the degree of national ownership as defined by the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action.
25. To understand how the joint programme **operates** and assess the **efficiency of its management model** in planning, coordinating, managing and executing resources allocated for its implementation, through an analysis of its procedures and institutional mechanisms. This analysis will seek to uncover the factors for success and limitations in inter-agency tasks within the **One UN** framework.
26. To identify the programme's **degree of effectiveness** among its participants, its contribution to the objectives of the **Children Food Security and Nutrition thematic window**, and the Millennium Development Goals at the local and/or country level.

Scope

27. This mid-term evaluation assesses the progress of implementation of the JP from its inception until its mid point. The JP officially started in late December 2009 when the first tranche of funds were transferred to the UN agencies. The evaluation will cover 6 quarters from the beginning of January 2010 to the end of June 2011.
28. The mid-term evaluation should be seen as an important opportunity in the programme cycle to review progress against initial project targets and identify challenges and opportunities moving ahead. The primary value of an MTE is as a forward-looking exercise...reorienting activities and approaches given the experience of the first half of project implementation. It should look at impact of programme activities and direction (positive and negative) and not just report on activity level achievements.

Methodology

29. The first step in the MTE was a **desk review** of relevant documents in early September 2011, in this case including: Project Document, MDGF Nutrition Action Plan, project monitoring reports, MDGF Action Plan Food Security, MDG-F mission report, MDG Inception Workshop report, results framework, and Field Visit Reports.
30. An **in-country mission** took place between 21-30 September 2011, where a combination of first hand observation, interviews and discussion groups were used depending on logistical considerations. Interviews will included project staff from all partner agencies, government counterparts, beneficiaries to the degree possible, provincial/district level nutrition actors, community members and leaders, and implementing partners. Two brief field visits were conducted, in Daikundi and in Kabul. (Districts 7 and 8)
31. Following the initial interviews and field visits, a PMC was held where initial findings were shared and discussed, and clarifications were made.
32. Following the mission, a draft report was shared with the MDG-F and country team in accordance with the timeline set out in the TOR.

Constraints and limitations on the study conducted

33. **Security:** The field visit was scheduled for 8 working days, two of which were lost due to being locked down due to security reasons, forcing cancellation or rescheduling of many meetings and field visits. This was largely made up through rescheduling but it impacted the number of people met and the time allocated with each.
34. **Access:** Due to cultural and security issues, access to direct target beneficiaries (incl women) of the project was extremely limited. The trip to Daikundi involved more time in transit than 'on the ground', as security issues made it impossible to stay overnight or return to Kabul after dark. Therefore visits were short and did not allow for much depth to the discussions with beneficiaries, local government staff or IP's. The field trip to project areas in Kabul was rescheduled due to security restrictions, leaving very little time.

Main Substantive and Financial Progress of the Joint Programme

Findings

Design level

Relevance

35. The JP document makes a clear case that it addresses a critical need in Afghanistan, effectively using quantitative socio-economic data as the basis for its analysis. It leverages the experiences and comparative advantages of each of the participating agencies. It also ties in clearly with national priorities and the UNDAF 2010-2013, which was in its development at the time of preparing this project document. Finally, the JP document provides a realistic and frank assessment of challenges particular to the sectors (limited political commitment, low funding, etc) and identifies planned means to overcome them. The original premise of the project remains valid and relevant.

Scope

36. The intended geographical reach is manageable, although limited field-based staff travel difficulties may have warranted a further concentration of provinces/districts selected. The project is being implemented in two districts in each of the following five provinces: Badakhshan, Nangahar, Daikundi, Bamiyan and Kabul. The ten distinct outputs outlined in the project document have been consolidated to a degree, making them more manageable.

Time

37. Even with the inherent challenges of implementing project in Afghanistan, the project document allocated sufficient time for the intended activities. Despite a quick start in the recruitment the JPTAC position and identifying the current position holder, a programme criticality review (assessing the benefits/risks of fielding international staff) led the PMC to delay the placement of the JPTAC until November 2010. While some preparatory work was done prior to her arrival, most of the substantive work did not begin until the JPTAC was in place. However, there is still a realistic chance that the project can meet its objectives within the originally planned timeframe, although a no-cost extension may be required for six months. This need should be assessed at a later date based on progress if required.

Cost

38. The total budget allocated for the project appears to be adequate for the scale of activities planned, although some were inadequately budgeted and that that caused some delays (e.g. baseline survey). However, there is some concern and confusion about how the budget breakdown between agencies was originally determined, as some agencies have a very small amount allocated. Now that project activities are picking up, the project team

may face delays if the request and transfer of the 2nd tranche is not done in a timely manner.

Processes level

Efficiency

39. For the period covered in this MTE, overall delivery stood at 53.3% of the first tranche, or 17.2% of the total budget, as of June 30, 2011. Delivery figures are as follows:

	FAO	UNICEF	UNIDO	WFP	WHO	Total
Approved Budget	\$3,665,178	\$511,266	\$475,825	\$149,456	\$195,275	\$4,997,000
Amount Received	\$1,224,919	\$147,981	\$138,859	\$44,837	\$56,630	\$1,613,226
Total Disbursed	\$622,462	\$108,864	\$28,256	\$44,837	\$56,630	\$861,049

40. Implementation to date has been slower than expected for all outputs, due largely to the late start of the JPTAC for reasons mentioned previously. A JP Inception Workshop was held in February 2011, which appeared to be very valuable in terms of developing a cohesive plan, buy-in from relevant stakeholders and clarifying targets and monitoring criteria. District action plans have been prepared in all target areas. Each of the partner agencies has been given overall responsibility for one of the 5 target provinces.

41. In terms of Outcome 1, a total of 13 contracts (total value of US\$ 1,046, 637) have been awarded to CSO's through the joint fund for the implementation of nutrition and/or food security initiatives, or studies at the district level. These focus on the establishment of household, community and other types of gardens; training on food processing and storage; and income generation opportunities. In addition, agencies have been implementing activities such as: food dehydration (UNIDO); developing trainings/TOT's on SAM, MSAM and GM&P (WHO); and purchase of micronutrients (UNICEF) and supplementary feeding supplies (WFP). Activities are well aligned with the proposed outputs and are contributing to their achievement.

42. A significant effort has been put into the collection of baseline information with the eventual goal of better targeting of interventions. Two of the CSO contracts are for assessments/surveys, notably a baseline survey of nutrition and household food security in 4 provinces, and a gap analysis of Basic Public Health Services (BPHS) in the target areas. In addition, MUAC screening is being conducted (on a planned 90 day cycle) directly by IP's or through training of Community Health Workers (CHW's) or teachers. The assessments are ongoing with the results expected by the end of 2011.

43. Activities under Outcome 2 have deviated significantly from those planned in the project document, due to a reluctance (of the project team and the government) to produce stand alone policy documents, as well as reflecting ongoing efforts in the sector that the project team/its members are supporting. (Notably a joint FAO/WFP Policy Framework on FS and Nutrition, and the World Bank-led Multi-sectoral Plan of Action for Nutrition, to which many members of the project team are active contributors) The project team or its members have provided assistance to other wider policy initiatives and forums as well.
44. While not originally given such prominence in the project document under Outcome 2,, excellent progress has been made in working with educational institutions. Through a series of workshops initiated by the project in partnership with the Ministry of Education (MoE), nutrition education has been included in the national curriculum (primary) for the upcoming school year. Talks have been initiated with the Ministry of High Education (MoHE) and Kabul Medical University (KMU) to look at partnerships with overseas universities to develop a tertiary module in nutrition.
45. Overall, progress as of the end of the evaluation period has been much slower than anticipated due to the late start of the project, but impressive groundwork has been laid for a substantial, targeted acceleration of achievements.

Communication and Advocacy

46. The unique identity of the project is very well developed. Project staff and government counterparts identify themselves as working “with the MDG project”; there is a tight core project team working within the MAIL (not in agency offices); and all communication materials seen are identified by the MDG-F logo. Visibility materials have been produced and distributed (hats, scarves, information posters, folders, etc) with the MDG-F logo, along with business cards for those working with the project.
47. Advocacy of the broader MDG agenda, and the joint efforts of UN agencies in addressing nutrition and food security, has not been done in a unified fashion. This project provides a good but as yet unexplored opportunity for the UN to speak with one voice on a critical issue.

Risk Management

48. The project document has a basic risk analysis section and steps/ideas on how to mitigate the two risks included (security and staffing). Risk management, as an ongoing practise, was not witnessed during the evaluation mission.

M&E Structures

49. Government staff does a significant portion of the district level monitoring, with Provincial Nutrition Officers (PNO's) and District Agricultural Extension Officer overseeing activities related to their respective areas. Reporting is done vertically through established ministry channels, with additional feedback provided through the Provincial and District Coordination Committees (PCC/DCC) , which were established by the project to facilitate communication.
50. A second layer of monitoring is made possible by the decision of the project to have one of each of the partner agencies as the focal point for each of the 5 provinces, based partly on that agencies existing presence in the province. It is not clear that this setup has been fully utilized to date for monitoring of overall project activities in the districts.
51. Some direct monitoring is done by project staff through field visits, with one staff member regularly working out of Badakhshan.
52. During the project Inception Workshop, the monitoring indicators were completely revised and are now SMART, giving a solid basis for assessing the impact of project activities, outputs and outcomes once they are further along. Some concern was expressed by agencies about the validity of MUAC screening results which from part of the monitoring foundation (quality control issues of those doing the screening); if this is the case, more dedicated support should be provided by all concerned agencies to ensure the project is obtaining credible results.

Project Management Arrangements

53. The project team is fully staffed, and appears to work together very well in a cohesive fashion. Likewise, the project team has gotten very good operational and programmatic support from FAO in its role as administrative agent for the project.
54. Management of the project and its activities are centred on clearly articulated and focused results that it seeks to achieve. Substantial effort has been put into oriented the project effectively, both through developing a strategic framework and in quantifying monitoring indicators.
55. Many activities are implemented, supported and/or monitored by provincial and district level government staff from MAIL, MoPH and MRRD. This has been an effective way to ensure government ownership and capacity development, as well as working around the challenge of access to these areas for UN staff due to security restrictions.

56. Having each agency being a focal point for each of the target provinces is a positive way to assigning ownership/accountability within a joint project. However, it is not clear that this has translated into improved monitoring of all JP activities by the responsible provincial agency focal point.

Operational Issues

57. A significant issue has been how disbursement of funds has been done to partner agencies, where in all cases the non-FAO partner agencies have spent (or very nearly) their initial disbursement but have not had access to additional funds because total delivery was below 70%.

58. While this has been temporarily addressed through utilizing funding from other non-project resources, it limits the ability of agencies to move forward if they are unable to predict when they will be reimbursed. Solutions to this situation (such as forwarding amounts from the 1st tranche joint fund) were not pursued, and this has caused some frustration.

59. The financial amount of contracts for IP's under the joint fund was limited due to procurement thresholds of FAO local approval authority. However, this is not a feasible long-term strategy for the project to adopt for future contracts, as it artificially limits the size of contract and promotes resource allocation based on arbitrary dollar amounts rather than scoping each intervention based on comparative needs..

60. Currently, 3 agencies (UNICEF, WHO and UNIDO) have recruited a staff member employed (and paid) entirely from the project budget, but reporting lines do not include any connection to the JPTAC. Given that they are fully resourced through the project, some form of dual reporting might be considered.

Interagency Coordination

61. In terms of formal interaction between the agencies, an inception workshop, and regular TWC and PMC meetings (mainly with HOA level participation) have been used to seek consensus and/or approval on key issues and decisions. Additional measures, such as appointing one agency as focal for each province, have had some success in promoting higher levels of engagement.

62. The majority of the agency interventions (particularly under Outcome 1) are not unique to the project; each agency is implementing the same sort of activities that it does in its normal programme. While there may be more coordination (information sharing), the district level interventions do not benefit overly from the joint nature of the programme in terms of innovation. (i.e. FAO promotes local gardens and food processing, UNICEF provides micronutrient supplementation, etc)

- 63.** Given the fact that all but one of the agencies have dedicated, funded positions under this project (not only assigned focal points), there is scope for improvement if agencies are willing to clarify requirements for CNFS-funded staff to be accountable to the project directly. A common office was initially explored but deemed untenable due to the logistics/security issues in Kabul; possibly some middle ground solution (set times/days working in the MDG-F office) could be sought.
- 64.** While FAO is the lead agency of this JP, it should be noted that it is not presented as such; the CNFS has a well-defined identity around being an independent, multi-agency project.

Government Engagement

- 65.** The level of government engagement in the CNFS is exceedingly high, which should be seen as a major success of the project to date. Visits to various government ministries made it quite obvious that the project team/members were very regularly there, and a collegial relationship was observed. Government staff (from Deputy Ministers to technical staff) knew the “MDG project” and spoke in a way that showed they felt a good degree of ownership over it.
- 66.** Part of this is due to physical presence; the project team is located within MAIL offices (and one staff member based in the MoPH on a ½ time basis) and this proximity allows for regular, instant access without the formality common with UN/Govt meetings.
- 67.** Many of the project activities—and coordination and monitoring functions—are implemented by government staff at the subnational level. PNO’s are conducting many of the trainings for community health workers (CHWs), agricultural extension officers are working with communities to establish gardens and introducing new farming techniques. The linkages with and support from the MRRD has been very important for community mobilization and access, through its networks of Community Development Councils (CDC) and, with MOWA, women’s Shuras. There is a compelling level of commitment and ownership at both national and subnational level.
- 68.** The establishment and support of the PCC’s and DCC’s has contributed to the degree of partnership between ministries and other partners at the subnational level. One provincial officer noted that when the first PCC was called, people in his ministry did not want to attend because the first meeting was hosted at another ministry’s office. Now, he says, “we work together easily and much more than we ever had in the past. We share information and come up with joint plans”.

Results level

Effectiveness

69. Most of the deliverables anticipated have not been achieved by the end of the first 6 quarters covered by this evaluation. Given the lack of baseline data at this point, the late start of many activities and the lack of access to beneficiaries due to travel restrictions, it is not possible to comment on impact at this time. However, project momentum has unquestionably picked up and a full, dedicated and very cohesive team is in place.
70. At the activity level, there is a considerable degree of integration in the approach used within the joint fund, where different elements of food security and nutrition support are provided concurrently. As an example: home or community gardens are being supported to promote increased vegetable intake; cooking classes are conducted to show how these (sometimes) new vegetables can be prepared; community access to classes and equipment for food preservation (dehydrating, pickling, etc) are provided; and MUAC screening is conducted to identify cases of SAM to be referred to health facilities.
71. This is reinforced by the creation of PCC/DCC's for local coordination, where the mandates of various government ministries are brought together as well as local IP's and agencies.
72. An integrated approach by partner agencies is not as clearly seen as many activities are implemented in parallel without a definitive link between them. Each agency is doing its standard nutrition/food security activities in relative isolation, with a missing degree of joint planning and implementation that could make the whole greater than the sum of its parts.
73. The question of sustainability was raised during the course of the evaluation, particularly given the relatively small budget and short timeframe of the JP. This is a fair and predictable question, particularly given the size of many development budgets in Afghanistan. It is reinforced that to date many of the activities are localized, quick impact projects. However, many elements of the project approach (clear government ownership and central and local level, focused partnership with shuras and community-based organizations) may contribute to a more sustained impact.
74. The degree to which the project genuinely works through government staff at the subnational level, and engages the national counterparts, are positive indicators for enhanced sustainability. Technical training study tours, such as food preservation technologies, are being organized and spots given (in most cases) to the subnational government staff that are actually giving or overseeing the trainings at the community level.
75. Attempts to harmonize reporting and monitoring systems of the main government partners (MoPH and MAIL), as proposed in the project document, have not been pursued to date. Given the timeframe of the project, the complexity of the task and the inherently project-centric justification to do so, not pursuing this was the correct choice.

76. The strong focus on collecting usable data to inform decision making in the project, through the baseline survey and the BPHS mapping of target areas, will potentially make future project interventions more targeted and credible, and assist the project in seeking out additional donor resources if that option is pursued. The fundamentals are (being put) in place for a solid project with many unique characteristics; a focused resource mobilization strategy should be developed to help to continue and expand the model.
77. However, to be effective it will also require a more integrated approach to budget management to be followed through effectively. The current budgetary allocations to each agency should not be seen as set in stone, or it will discourage a needs-based approach to effectively addressing the scope of the problem. For example, WFP can provide supplementary feeding to X number of children given its current allocation; if more is required to respond to the identified needs then consideration should be given to this. Likewise, if food production in some areas is found to be adequate, a different allocation might be considered for food preservation support. The budget was created several years ago in different circumstances, and the project should not limit itself by rigorously following set amounts.
78. This is also true for tranche allocations by agency; if one of the partner agencies is held back from continuing activities because the project cannot trigger the final transfer, funding should be allocated from the joint portion of the budget if available (within agreed limits).
79. The inclusion of nutrition education in elementary (Gr 1-6) school curriculum, achieved in a relatively short amount of time, is extremely positive and provides an opportunity for a durable outcome that may have long lasting and widespread impact. It is a good example of the project team thinking beyond the project document. Inroads with the KMU and MoHE, to develop a partnership with other educational institutions to develop post-secondary modules in nutrition, should continue to be pursued.
80. To date, other broader policy work has not progressed as vigorously. A deficit still remains in how nutrition is prioritized within existing policies or practices. This is not to suggest pursuing specific aspects of Outcome 2 as outlined in the project document, but to note that the collective expertise of partner agencies might be brought to bear in a more concerted effort to identify innovative ways in which the UN system might assist the GoA in addressing these linked challenges.
81. Despite the initial delays in implementation, much work has been done to develop a cohesive team, buy-in from stakeholders and better targeting for upcoming activities. This is critical (and not always easily achieved) in a joint programming environment, and should be valued as such.

	Conclusions	Recommendations
1.	Significant resources have been put into the collection of data (baseline survey, BPHS mapping and MUAC screening), which is positive and should allow for better targeting during the latter half of the project.	This information should not only be used to inform nutrition and FS interventions, but as the basis for advocacy, genuine joint planning and possibly resource mobilization.
2.	Contract awards through the joint fund have been limited (financially) to fall within FAO's in-country procurement delegation levels, due in part to a desire to get activities started quickly to compensate for the late start. However, this artificially determines the size of contract, promoting resource allocation based on arbitrary dollar amounts rather than scoping each intervention based on comparative needs.	Future activities will be informed by the baseline data being collected, and contracting should be done on a needs basis, even if this represents a longer contracting process. This will also allow for a move away from the current propensity towards quick impact projects, which by their nature are geared towards quick gains rather than sustainable impact.
3.	Inclusion of nutrition education in the national elementary school curriculum is a substantive achievement of the project to date, and should be built upon.	Capacity building of teachers might be expanded as a very limited number of Kabul-based teachers received training during the process of developing the curriculum. A training roll out that would reach provincially and district-based teachers could substantially increase the impact of the revised curriculum. This may be done through existing teacher training channels, such as UNICEF training on the use of iodized salt.
3.1.	See above.	Similar curriculum revisions or supplementation should be supported for grades beyond 1-6 to the degree possible.
4.	Advocacy of the broader MDG agenda, and the joint efforts of UN agencies in addressing nutrition and food security, has not	An advocacy strategy should be articulated among partner agencies to identify key opportunities and forums for communicating the criticality of linking nutrition and food security strategies. Where possible this

	been done in a concerted fashion.	should be fact based, using data collected through the project and communicating the benefits of a harmonized approach. The MDG-F guidance note should inform the advocacy strategy.
5.	One layer of monitoring is made possible by the decision of the project to have one partner agency as the focal point for each of the 5 provinces, based partly on that agency's existing presence in the province. If there is good agency commitment to this, it could help mitigate a significant risk by reducing the difficulty in project monitoring posed by travel restrictions in Afghanistan.	Discussions with partner agencies should clarify if their field based staff (in their assigned province) can be made available for this role of overseeing project activities, even those that are not implemented by them directly. This should be realistic and based on a clear outline of the scope and location of CNFS activities and the time required to provide monitoring support.
6.	Given the fact that all but one of the agencies have dedicated, funded positions under this project, there is scope for improvement in agency engagement if agencies are willing to clarify requirements for CNFS-funded staff to be accountable to the project directly.	Consideration should be given to a dual reporting line for staff funded through the CNFS, between the JPTAC and agency supervisor. This will help promote joint action and optimum communication.
7.	An excellent level of government engagement is present in the project, both at the national and subnational levels. Subnational coordination between ministries is very high.	The experiences of local coordination should be captured as a lesson learned, and ways sought to see how the integration can be furthered and used as a basis for further resource mobilization.
8.	An integrated approach by partner agencies is not as clearly seen as many activities are implemented in parallel without a definitive link between them. Each agency is doing its standard nutrition/food security activities in relative isolation, with a missing degree of joint planning and implementation that could make the whole greater than the sum of its parts.	Planning (post assessments) should be done with key project focal points/staff "locked in a room", looking for a coherent approach to dealing with the needs identified. Continuing with typical activities should not be seen as the default decisions; rather, the opportunity for some innovative, authentic joint planning should be seized.

9.	<p>Technical training study tours, such as food preservation technologies, are being organized and spots given (in most cases) to the subnational government staff that are actually giving or overseeing the trainings at the community level. Skills transfer is also made more plausible with the co-location of the project team in the counterpart ministries.</p>	<p>A capacity development plan should be developed based on the experiences of study tours to date, with a clear rationale for why each person/group is proposed to attend a particular training. This should include a plan for how these staff will share the knowledge with other upon their return. A balanced approach should be taken between trainings that serve the short-term goals of the project, with those that provide broader skill sets to relevant government partners.</p>
10.	<p>Attempts to harmonize reporting and monitoring systems of the main government partners (MoPH and MAIL), as proposed in the project document, have not been pursued to date. Given the timeframe of the project, the complexity of the task and the inherently project-centric justification to do so, not pursuing this was the correct choice.</p>	<p>In the absence of a harmonized reporting mechanism between concerned ministries, obtaining programmatic feedback and information should be obtained through the district/provincial coordination committees. This will allow for direct information gathering based on the data and reporting needs of the project.</p>
11.	<p>To be fully effective as a JP, a more integrated approach to budget management should be followed. The current budgetary allocations to each agency should not be seen as set in stone, or it will discourage a needs-based approach to effectively addressing the scope of the problem.</p>	<p>When planning activities based on the needs assessment, the budget should be viewed as flexible to determine how to allocate funds to best address shared objectives. FAO is not responsible to develop the entire pooled fund.</p>
12.	<p>Sustainability of project interventions will be somewhat limited by the scope of funding available. The project approach (high government ownership at central/local level, curriculum initiatives and selective capacity development efforts) contribute to sustainability, but the community interventions will be limited to demonstrations and small scale community support.</p>	<p>Once sufficient information is collected through assessments and interventions are further along, an impact assessment would be helpful to be able to credibly demonstrate the effectiveness of the approach. This could be used as a basis for further resource mobilization to expand community level interventions.</p>

Annex 1: List of Persons Met

Name	Position and Organization
UN Staff	
Mr. Michael Keating	UN Resident Coordinator
Mr. David Joy	Head of the Resident Coordinator's Office
Ms. Marziya Baydulloeva	Coordination Officer, RCO
Mr. Tekeste Tekie	FAO Representative
Dr. Nina Dodd	JP Technical Advisor and Coordinator
Dr. M Akbar Shahristani	National Food Security Coordinator
Dr. Muhebullah Latifi	National Nutrition Coordinator
Abdul Khaliq Abbasi	Project Coordinator, MDG-F
Mohammad Shaker Delawar	Admin/Finance Assistant
Mohammad Mahmood Taieb	Agronomist, MDG-F
Dr. Wassima Qarizada	National Curriculum Development Advisor
Nazifa Natique	Food Processing and Nutrition Officer
Moeen Ud Din Siraj	National Operations Officer, FAO
Dr. Adriana Zarrelli	Chief of Health and Nutrition Section, UNICEF
Shah Mahmmod Nasiri	Micronutrients Officer, UNICEF
Fakhruddin Azizi	Head of UNIDO Operations in Afghanistan
Abdul Khaliq Abbasi	Project Coordinator, UNIDO
Zarina Safi	UNICEF
Hildegard Tuttinghoff	Head of Programme, WFP
Carrie Morrison	Programme Specialist-Nutrition, WFP
Dr Adela Mubasher	MCH/National Programme Officer, WHO
Government of Afghanistan	
Abdul Ghani Ghuriani	Deputy Minister Technical Affairs, MAIL
	Deputy Minister, MoPH
	Head of Preventative Medicine, MoPH
Dr Abdul Qadir Burrah	Provincial Nutrition Officer, Badakhshan
Naseer Ahmad Popal	Social Protection Director, MRRD
Implementing Partners	
Semin Qasmi	Programme Manager, CARE
Nayat Karim	Deputy Director-Programme Development, AfghanAid
Dr. Abdul Latif Rashed	Program Director, MOVE Welfare Organization

Annex 2: Terms of Reference

GENERIC TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE MID-TERM EVALUATION OF CHILDREN FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION JOINT PROGRAMMES

General Context: The MDGF and the Children Food Security and Nutrition

In December 2006, the UNDP and the Government of Spain signed a major partnership agreement for the amount of €528 million, with the aim of contributing to progress on the MDGs and other development goals through the United Nations System. In addition, on 24 September 2008 Spain pledged €90 million towards the launch of a thematic window on Childhood and Nutrition. The MDG Achievement Fund (MDGF) supports countries in their progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and other development goals by funding innovative programmes that have an impact on the population and potential for duplication.

The MDGF operates through the UN teams in each country, promoting increased coherence and effectiveness in development interventions through collaboration among UN agencies. The Fund uses a joint programme mode of intervention and has currently approved 128 joint programmes in 49 countries. These reflect eight thematic windows that contribute in various ways towards progress on the MDGs.

With US\$134.5 million allocated to 24 joint programmes, this area of work represents almost 20% of the MDG-F's work. Our efforts contribute to achieving the MDG goals of reducing child mortality and eradicating extreme poverty and hunger.

Interventions range from providing low cost nutritional packages that can save lives and promote healthy development to engaging with pregnant and lactating mothers ensuring they are healthy and aware of key nutrition issues. Advocacy for mainstreaming children's right to food into national plans and policies is also a key element of the fight against under nutrition.

The 24 joint programmes encompass a wide range of subjects and results. Nevertheless, certain similar underlying characteristics can be identified across most of these joint programmes. The majority of the programmes in the window seek to contribute to (1) directly improving the nutrition and food security of the population, particularly children and pregnant women, and (2) strengthening the government's capacity to know about and plan for food security and nutrition problems. Most of the other outcomes fit in these two themes, broadly defined. For example, improving food security and increasing the supply of nutritious foods with agricultural interventions is directly related to the first outcome, reducing food insecurity and malnutrition. Similarly, many Joint Programs propose improving policies on foods security, either through mainstreaming into general policies or through the revision of current policies on food security.

The beneficiaries of the Joint Programs are of three main types. Virtually all joint programs involve supporting the government, at the national and/or local levels. Many programs also directly target children and/or pregnant women, who are the most vulnerable to malnutrition and food insecurity.

Finally, many programs also benefit the health sector, which is at the forefront of the fight against, and treatment of, malnutrition.

The following points should be provided by the joint programme team

- Describe the joint programme, programme name and goals; include when it started, what outputs and outcomes are sought, its contribution to the MDGs at the local and national levels, its duration and current stage of implementation.

2. OVERALL GOAL OF THE EVALUATION

One of the roles of the Secretariat is to monitor and evaluate the MDGF. This role is fulfilled in line with the instructions contained in the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy and the Implementation Guide for Joint Programmes under the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund. These documents stipulate that all joint programmes lasting longer than two years will be subject to a mid-term evaluation.

Mid-term evaluations are formative in nature and seek **to generate knowledge, identifying best practices and lessons learned and improve implementation of the programmes during their remaining period of implementation.** As a result, the conclusions and recommendations generated by this evaluation will be addressed to its main users: the Programme Management Committee, the National Steering Committee and the Secretariat of the Fund.

3. SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION AND SPECIFIC GOALS

The mid-term evaluation will use an expedited process to carry out a systematic, fast-paced analysis of the design, process and results or results trends of the **joint programme**, based on the scope and criteria included in these terms of reference. This will enable conclusions and recommendations for the joint programme to be formed within a period of approximately four months.

The unit of analysis or object of study for this mid-term evaluation is the joint programme, understood to be the set of components, outcomes, outputs, activities and inputs that were detailed in the joint programme document and in associated modifications made during implementation.

This mid-term evaluation has the following **specific objectives**:

82. To discover the programme's **design quality and internal coherence** (needs and problems it seeks to solve) and its external coherence with the UNDAF, the National Development Strategies and the **Millennium Development Goals**, and find out the degree of national ownership as defined by the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action.

83. To understand how the joint programme **operates** and assess the **efficiency of its management model** in planning, coordinating, managing and executing resources allocated for its implementation, through an analysis of its procedures and institutional mechanisms. This analysis will seek to uncover the factors for success and limitations in inter-agency tasks within the **One UN** framework.
84. To identify the programme's **degree of effectiveness** among its participants, its contribution to the objectives of the Children Food Security and Nutrition **thematic window**, and the Millennium Development Goals at the local and/or country level.

4. EVALUATION QUESTIONS, LEVELS AND CRITERIA

The main users of the evaluation represented in the evaluation reference group (Section 8 of the TOR), and specifically the coordination and implementation unit of the joint programme, are responsible for contributing to this section. Evaluation questions and criteria may be added or modified up to a reasonable limit, bearing in mind the viability and the limitations (resources, time, etc.) of a quick interim evaluation exercise.

The evaluation questions define the information that must be generated as a result of the evaluation process. The questions are grouped according to the criteria to be used in assessing and answering them. These criteria are, in turn, grouped according to the three levels of the programme.

Design level

- **Relevance: The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with the needs and interest of the people, the needs of the country, the Millennium Development Goals and the policies of associates and donors.**
 - a) To what extent the identification of the problems, inequalities and gaps, with their respective causes, clear in the joint programme?
 - b) To what extent the Joint Programme take into account the particularities and specific interests of women, minorities and ethnic groups in the areas of intervention?
 - c) To what extent has the intervention strategy been adapted to the areas of intervention in which it is being implemented? What actions does the programme envisage, to respond to obstacles that may arise from the political and socio-cultural context?
 - d) To what extent were the monitoring indicators relevant and do they meet the quality needed to measure the outputs and outcomes of the joint programme?
 - e) To what extent has the MDG-F Secretariat contributed to raising the quality of the design of the joint programmes?

- **Ownership in the design: national social actors' effective exercise of leadership in the development interventions**
- a) To what extent do the intervention objectives and strategies of the Joint Programme respond to national and regional plans?
- b) To what extent have the country's national and local authorities and social stakeholders been taken into consideration, participated, or have become involved, at the design stage of the development intervention?

Process level

- **Efficiency: The extent to which the resources/inputs (funds, time etc.) have been turned into results**
- a) How well does the joint programme's management model – that is, its tools, financial resources, human resources, technical resources, organizational structure, information flows and management decision-making – contribute to generating the expected outputs and outcomes?
- b) To what extent are the participating agencies coordinating with each other and with the government and civil society? Is there a methodology underpinning the work and internal communications that contributes to the joint implementation?
- c) To what extent are there efficient mechanisms for coordination that prevent counterparts and beneficiaries from becoming overloaded?
- d) To what extent does the pace of implementing programme outputs ensure the completeness of the joint programme's results? How do the different components of the joint programme interrelate?
- e) To what extent work methodologies, financial tools etc. shared among agencies and among joint programmes are being used?
- f) To what extent more efficient (sensitive) and appropriate measures been adopted to respond to the political and socio-cultural context identified?
- g) How conducive are current UN agency procedures to joint programming? How can existing bottlenecks be overcome and procedures further harmonized?
- **Ownership in the process: National social actors' effective exercise of leadership in the development interventions**

- a) To what extent have the target population and the participants taken ownership of the programme, assuming an active role in it?
- b) To what extent have national public/private resources and/or counterparts been mobilized to contribute to the programme's goals and impacts?

Results level

- Efficacy: Extent to which the objectives of the development intervention have been met or are expected to be met, taking into account their relative importance.

- a) To what extent is the joint programme contributing to the attainment of the development outputs and outcomes initially expected /stipulated in the programme document?
 - 1. To what extent and in what ways is the joint programme contributing to the Millennium Development Goals at the local and national levels?
 - 2. To what extent and in what ways is the joint programme contributing to the goals set in the thematic window?
 - 3. To what extent (policy, budgets, design, and implementation) and in what ways is the joint programme contributing to improve the implementation of the principles of the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action?
 - 4. To what extent and in what ways is the joint programme contributing to the goals of delivering as one at country level?
- b) To what extent are joint programme's outputs and outcomes synergistic and coherent to produce development results? `
- c) To what extent is the joint programme having an impact on the targeted citizens?
- d) Are any good practices, success stories, lessons learned or transferable examples been identified? Please, describe and document them
- e) What types of differentiated effects are resulting from the joint programme in accordance with the sex, race, ethnic group, rural or urban setting of the beneficiary population, and to what extent?
- f) To what extent is the joint programme contributing to the advance and the progress of fostering national ownership processes and outcomes (the design and implementation of National Development Plans, Public Policies, UNDAF, etc)
- g) To what extent is the joint programme helping to increase stakeholder/citizen dialogue and or engagement on development issues and policies?
- h) To what extent is the joint programme having an impact on national ownership and coordination among government entities?

Sustainability: The probability that the benefits of the intervention will continue in the long term.

- a) Are the necessary premises occurring to ensure the sustainability of the impacts of the joint programme?
At local and national level:
- i. Is the programme supported by national and/or local institutions?
 - ii. Are these institutions showing technical capacity and leadership commitment to keep working with the programme and to repeat it?
 - iii. Have operating capacities been created and/or reinforced in national and local partners?
 - iv. Do the partners have sufficient financial capacity to keep up the benefits produced by the programme?
 - v. Is the duration of the programme sufficient to ensure a cycle that will ensure the sustainability of the interventions?
 - vi. Have networks or network institutions been created or strengthened to carry out the roles that the joint programme is performing?
- b) To what extent are the visions and actions of partners consistent with or different from those of the joint programme?
- c) In what ways can governance of the joint programme be improved so as to increase the chances of achieving sustainability in the future?

Country level

- d) During the analysis of the evaluation, what lessons have been learned, and what best practices can be transferred to other programmes or countries?
- e) To what extent and in what way is the joint programme contributing to progress towards the Millennium Development Goals in the country?
- f) To what extent and in which ways are the joint programmes helping make progress towards United Nations reform? One UN
- g) How have the principles for aid effectiveness (ownership, alignment, managing for development results and mutual accountability) been developed in the joint programmes?
- h) To what extent is the joint programme helping to influence the country's public policy framework?

5. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The mid-term evaluation will use an international consultant, appointed by MDG-F, as the Evaluator to conduct the evaluation and a locally hired consultant who will support the Evaluator by providing information about local context such as institutions, protocol, traditions, etc. and assist with translation of key meetings/ interviews during the mission as needed. It is the sole responsibility of the Evaluator to deliver the inception, draft final and final reports.

The Evaluator will use methodologies and techniques as determined by the specific needs for information, the questions set out in the TOR, the availability of resources and the priorities of stakeholders. In all cases, the Evaluator is expected to analyse all relevant information sources, such as annual reports, programme documents, internal review reports, programme files, strategic country development documents and any other documents that may provide evidence on which to form opinions. The Evaluator is also expected to use interviews as a means to collect relevant data for the evaluation.

The methodology and techniques to be used in the evaluation should be described in detail in the inception report and the final evaluation report, and should contain, at a minimum, information on the instruments used for data collection and analysis, whether these be documents, interviews, field visits, questionnaires or participatory techniques.

6. EVALUATION DELIVERABLES

The Evaluator is responsible for submitting the following deliverables to the Secretariat of the MDGF:

✧ **Inception Report** (to be submitted within seven days of the submission of all programme documentation to the Evaluator)

This report will be 5 to 10 pages in length and will propose the methods, sources and procedures to be used for data collection. It will also include a proposed timeline of activities and submission of deliverables. The inception report will propose an initial theory of change to the joint programme that will be used for comparative purposes during the evaluation and will serve as an initial point of agreement and understanding between the Evaluator and the evaluation managers. The Evaluator will also share the inception report with the evaluation reference group to seek their comments and suggestions.

✧ **Draft Final Report** (to be submitted within 10 days of completion of the field visit)

The draft final report will contain the same sections as the final report (described in the next paragraph) and will be 20 to 30 pages in length. This report will be shared among the evaluation reference group. It will also contain an executive report of no more than 5 pages that includes a brief description of the joint programme, its context and current situation, the purpose of the evaluation, its methodology and its main findings, conclusions and recommendations. The MDGF Secretariat will share the draft final report with the evaluation reference group to seek their comments and suggestions.

✧ **Final Evaluation Report** (to be submitted within seven days of receipt of the draft final report with comments)

The final report will be 20 to 30 pages in length. It will also contain an executive report of no more than 5 pages that includes a brief description of the joint programme, its context and current situation, the purpose of the evaluation, its methodology and its major findings, conclusions and recommendations. The MDGF Secretariat will send the final report to the evaluation reference group. This report will contain the following sections at a minimum:

1. Cover Page
2. Introduction
 - Background, goal and methodological approach
 - Purpose of the evaluation
 - Methodology used in the evaluation

- Constraints and limitations on the study conducted
3. Description of interventions carried out
 - - Initial concept
 - - Detailed description of its development: description of the hypothesis of change in the programme.
 4. Levels of Analysis: Evaluation criteria and questions
 5. Conclusions and lessons learned (prioritized, structured and clear)
 6. Recommendations
 7. Annexes

7. ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND PREMISES OF THE EVALUATION

The mid-term evaluation of the joint programme is to be carried out according to ethical principles and standards established by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).

- **Anonymity and confidentiality.** The evaluation must respect the rights of individuals who provide information, ensuring their anonymity and confidentiality.
- **Responsibility.** The report must mention any dispute or difference of opinion that may have arisen among the consultants or between the Evaluator and the reference group of the Joint Programme in connection with the findings and/or recommendations. The Evaluator must corroborate all assertions, and note any disagreement with them.
- **Integrity.** The Evaluator will be responsible for highlighting issues not specifically mentioned in the TOR, if this is needed to obtain a more complete analysis of the intervention.
- **Independence.** The Evaluator should ensure his or her independence from the intervention under review, and he or she must not be associated with its management or any element thereof.
- **Incidents.** If problems arise during the fieldwork, or at any other stage of the evaluation, the Evaluator must report these immediately to the Secretariat of the MDGF. If this is not done, the existence of such problems may in no case be used by the Evaluator to justify the failure to obtain the results stipulated by the Secretariat of the MDGF in these terms of reference.
- **Validation of information.** The Evaluator will be responsible for ensuring the accuracy of the information collected while preparing the reports and will be ultimately responsible for the information presented in the evaluation report.
- **Intellectual property.** In handling information sources, the Evaluator shall respect the intellectual property rights of the institutions and communities that are under review.

- **Delivery of reports.** If delivery of the reports is delayed, or in the event that the quality of the reports delivered is clearly lower than what was agreed, the penalties stipulated in these terms of reference will be applicable.

8. ROLES OF ACTORS IN THE EVALUATION

The main actors in the mid-term evaluation are the Secretariat of the MDGF, the Programme Management and the Programme Management Committee. The Programme Management Office, PMC, and RC Office will serve as the evaluation reference group. The role of the evaluation reference group will extend to all phases of the evaluation, including:

- Facilitating the participation of those involved in the evaluation design.
- Identifying information needs, defining objectives and delimiting the scope of the evaluation.
- Providing input on the evaluation planning documents (Work Plan and Communication, Dissemination and Improvement Plan).
- Providing input and participating in the drafting of the Terms of Reference.
- Facilitating the evaluation team's access to all information and documentation relevant to the intervention, as well as to key actors and informants who should participate in interviews, focus groups or other information-gathering methods.
- Monitoring the quality of the process and the documents and reports that are generated, so as to enrich these with their input and ensure that they address their interests and needs for information about the intervention.
- Disseminating the results of the evaluation, especially among the organizations and entities within their interest group.

The Secretariat of the MDGF shall manage the mid-term evaluation in its role as proponent of the evaluation, fulfilling the mandate to conduct and finance the mid-term evaluation. As manager of the mid-term evaluation, the Secretariat will be responsible for ensuring that the evaluation process is conducted as stipulated; promoting and leading the evaluation design; coordinating and monitoring progress and development in the evaluation study and the quality of the process. It shall also support the country in the main task of disseminating evaluation findings and recommendations.

9. TIMELINE FOR THE EVALUATION PROCESS

85. Design phase (15 days total)

1. The Secretariat shall send the generic TOR for mid-term evaluation of China's CCPF to the reference group. The reference group is then to adapt these to the concrete situation of the joint programme in China, using the lowest common denominator that is shared by all, for purposes of data aggregation and the provision of evidence for the rest of the MDGF levels of analysis (country, thematic window and MDGF).

This activity requires a dialogue between the Secretariat and the reference group of the evaluation. This dialogue should be aimed at rounding out and modifying some of the

questions and dimensions of the study that the generic TOR do not cover, or which are inadequate or irrelevant to the joint programme.

2. The MDGF Secretariat will send the finalized, contextualized TOR to the Evaluator it has chosen.
3. From this point on, the Portfolio Manager is responsible for managing the execution of the evaluation, with three main functions: to facilitate the work of the Evaluator, to serve as interlocutor between the parties (Evaluator, reference group in the country, etc.), and to review the deliverables that are produced.

86. Execution phase of the evaluation study (55-58 days total)

Desk study (15 days total)

1. The Portfolio Manager will brief the Evaluator (**1 day**). He/she will hand over a checklist of activities and documents to review, and explain the evaluation process. Discussion will take place over what the evaluation should entail.
2. The Evaluator will review the documents according to the standard list (see TOR annexes; programme document, financial, monitoring reports etc.).
3. The Evaluator will submit the inception report to the MDGF Secretariat; the report will include the findings from the document review and will specify how the evaluation will be conducted. The Evaluator will share the inception report with the evaluation reference group for comments and suggestions (within **seven days of delivery of all programme documentation to the consultant**).
4. The focal points for the evaluation (PMC Co-Chairs) and the Evaluator will prepare an agenda to conduct the field visit of the evaluation. (Interview with programme participants, stakeholders, focus groups, etc) (Within **seven days of delivery of the desk study report**).

Field visit (9-12 days)

1. In-country, the Evaluator will observe and contrast the preliminary conclusions reached through the study of the document review. The planned agenda will be carried out. To accomplish this, the Secretariat's Portfolio Manager may need to facilitate the Evaluator's visit by means of phone calls and emails to the reference group.
2. The Evaluator will be responsible for conducting a debriefing with the key actors he or she has interacted with.

Final Report (31 days total)

1. The Evaluator will deliver a draft final report, which the Secretariat's Portfolio Manager shall be responsible for sharing with the evaluation reference group (**within 10 days of the completion of the field visit**).

2. The evaluation reference group may ask that data or facts that it believes are incorrect be changed, as long as it provides data or evidence that supports its request. The Evaluator will have the final say over whether to accept or reject such changes. For the sake of evaluation quality, the Secretariat's Portfolio Manager can and should intervene so that erroneous data, and opinions based on erroneous data or not based on evidence, are changed **(within 14 days of delivery of the draft final report)**.

The evaluation reference group may also comment on the value judgements contained in the report, but these do not affect the Evaluator's freedom to express the conclusions and recommendations he or she deems appropriate, based on the evidence and criteria established.

3. The Secretariat's Portfolio Manager shall assess the quality of the final version of the evaluation report presented, using the criteria stipulated in the annex to this TOR **(within seven days of delivery of the draft final report)**.
4. Upon receipt of input from the reference group, the Evaluator shall decide which input to incorporate and which to omit. The Secretariat's Portfolio Manager shall review the final copy of the report, and this phase will conclude with the delivery of this report by the MDGF Secretariat to the evaluation reference group **(within seven days of delivery of the draft final report with comments)**.
5. **Phase of incorporating recommendations and improvement plan (within 21 days of delivery of the final report):**
 1. The Secretariat's Portfolio Manager, as representative of the Secretariat, shall engage in a dialogue with the reference group to establish an improvement plan that includes recommendations from the evaluation.
 2. The Secretariat's Portfolio Manager will hold a dialogue with the reference group to develop a simple plan to disseminate and report the results to the various interested parties.

10. ANNEXES

a) Document Review

This section must be completed and specified by the other users of the evaluation but mainly by the management team of the joint programme and by the Programme Management Committee. A minimum of documents that must be reviewed before the field trip shall be established; in general terms the Secretariat estimates that these shall include, as a minimum:

MDG-F Context

- MDGF Framework Document
- Summary of the M&E frameworks and common indicators
- YEM Thematic Window TORs
- General thematic indicators
- M&E strategy

- Communication and Advocacy Strategy
- MDG-F Joint Implementation Guidelines

Specific Documents for Joint Programme

Other in-country documents or information

- Evaluations, assessments or internal reports conducted by the joint programme
- Relevant documents or reports on the Millennium Development Goals at the local and national levels
- Relevant documents or reports on the implementation of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action in the country
- Relevant documents or reports on One UN, Delivering as One

b) File for the Joint Programme Improvement Plan

After the interim evaluation is complete, the phase of incorporating its recommendations shall begin. This file is to be used as the basis for establishing an improvement plan for the joint programme, which will bring together all the recommendations, actions to be carried out by programme management.

Evaluation Recommendation No. 1				
Response from the Joint Programme Management				
Key actions	Time frame	Person responsible	Follow-up	
1.1			Comments	Status
1.2				
1.3				
Evaluation Recommendation No. 2				

Response from the Joint Programme Management				
Key actions	Time frame	Person responsible	Follow-up	
2.1			Comments	Status
2.2				
2.3				
Evaluation Recommendation No. 3				
Response from the Joint Programme Management				
Key actions	Time frame	Person responsible	Follow-up	
3.1			Comments	Status
3.2				
3.3				