

United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)
Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board

**Template for delegations providing comments on the
country programme documents**
2020 First Regular Session

Delegation name: _____SWEDEN (Contribution from Embassy in Kinshasa_____

Draft country programme document: DRC CPD

Delegations are kindly invited to use this template to share their comments on any of the draft CPDs being presented during the forthcoming Board session.

In accordance with Executive Board decision 2014/1, country programme documents (CPDs) are considered and approved in one session, on a no-objection basis. All comments received by the Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board before the deadline will be made public on the Executive Board website, and considered by the respective regional office, in close consultation with the country office and the concerned Government.

General comments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The embassy provides a country programme support to UNICEF in DRC. This is because we are convinced that UNICEF’s mandate is more than relevant in the country, and we understood that only project specific supports will not help the agency reaching its efficiencies in this context. 2. We are therefore supportive of the zone of convergence approach that UNICEF CPD is promoting. It is very useful to have several zones with as many integrated and comprehensive packages as possible in order to impact the areas and sustainably change children and communities living conditions. 3. It is critical that the choice of zones of convergence be motivated by some objective criteria. There are many areas that are not currently selected but that should be on such a list. Areas with very few development actors (e.g. North and South Ubangi, Tshopo and Maniema...) should seriously be considered. 4. The document does not expand on the need to reinforce communities’ resilience and on how UNICEF is working to reinforce linkages between development and humanitarian interventions. This is against the background that UNICEF is one of the key Swedish partners on both sides in DRC. This CPD should be more explicit on these linkages.
Comments on specific aspects of the country programme document	<p>(Delegations providing comments may wish to include details, such as the page number X, paragraph number X, or annex (results and resources framework). Paragraph 4, page 3.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Low coverage of vaccination programmes needs to raise our attention on UNICEF work in DRC with regard to this particular topic. UNICEF should revisit/reassess their assistance to the national vaccination programme and act more proactively (by detecting and alerting on risks for epidemics due to low vaccination coverage). Vaccination levels are too low in some settings and it is unacceptable that key agencies like UNICEF are more acting on a reactive rather than proactive mode. (The number of children who have died due to measles epidemic this year are almost double the number of Ebola victims!)

Response from the UNICEF Regional/Country Office

Point 1. UNICEF appreciates the comments made by the Swedish Government on the draft country programme of cooperation between UNICEF and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the opportunity to offer additional information not captured in detail in the 6,000-word country programme document (CPD).

Point 2 and 3. Well noted and fully agree with the relevance of the convergence approach which is designed to promote synergy across sectors using a life-cycle approach with the goal of achieving greater impact on children's lives.

We also agree on the necessity to revise and update the selection of the zones of convergence. This will be done based on needs identified with the new MICS data, the upcoming Ebola transition plan and will be in line with the DRC's triple Nexus agenda and UNICEF's nexus approach.

Point 4. We revised the text of the CPD under para 19 to be more explicit on development and humanitarian linkages and community resilience building as below:

*"19. Building on past experience, region-specific approaches will be tailored to address disparities experienced by children in specific provinces **through strengthening coordination and convergence of humanitarian and development activities within the DRC's triple Nexus agenda (Humanitarian-Development-Peace)**. In areas not affected by conflict, UNICEF will: (a) strengthen systems for social-service delivery to address the multiple vulnerabilities faced by children; and (b) enhance risk-informed programming, including investment in preparedness to build resilience capacity in institutions and communities. In areas affected by conflict, natural disasters and epidemics, UNICEF, together with partners, will: (a) deliver fast, equitable and at-scale quality humanitarian assistance; and (b) harness the opportunity offered by humanitarian action to develop community systems and structures for resilience."*

Point 5. UNICEF is very concerned with the low immunization coverage in DRC. Increasing coverage is a key priority of the CPD. Consequently, UNICEF is actively working on health system strengthening in partnership with the WHO and GAVI to boost routine immunization services as the only mechanism to increase immunization coverage with sustainability. Access to health services including routine immunization is low especially in remote and hard-to-reach areas. In addition, DRC struggles to deliver on its commitments for the purchase of traditional vaccines and the co-financing of new vaccines.

In response to this situation and building on the momentum launched by the President's new Kinshasa Declaration for Strengthening Routine Immunization, UNICEF supported the Government to organize a National Forum on Immunization chaired by the Head of State.

Some of the specific outcomes of the forum include:

- A review of the entire national immunization strategy will be conducted, and UNICEF will support the development of a clear accountability framework.
- Routine immunization services will be strengthened through the Mashako Plan - "Reach every district/Reach every child" approach to boost coverage and equity of immunization support. As part of this plan, UNICEF will provide technical expertise to improve the supply chain in 12 provinces where the number of unvaccinated or incompletely vaccinated children is greater than 50,000.
- At national level the work around strengthening the cold chain system and its maintenance through the operationalization of the "Kinkole Hub" and the finalization of the construction of the "Kisangani Hub" (including the installation of solar refrigerators and the reinforcement of staff skills in logistics management) will continue.

- To increase demand for immunization services, communities will be directly involved in micro-planning and evaluation of vaccination services. Epidemiological surveillance will be strengthened in partnership with WHO for early detection and response to epidemics.