

# 2017 EVALUATION OF SUPPLY DIVISION'S SUPPLY COMMUNITY STRATEGY

Buiskool, B.J., Lekanne Deprez, F.R.E, Boom, D., Lindeboom, G.J. (2017) **Supply Division: Evaluation of Supply Division's Supply Community Strategy**, United Nations Children's Fund.

## *BACKGROUND*

Since 2008, UNICEF Supply Division (SD) has been implementing its Supply Community Strategy to address the findings from the 2007 Evaluation of the Global Supply Function (SFE), which concluded that Supply staff felt isolated and had limited possibilities for professional development or sharing experience. SD commissioned this evaluation to reflect on the progress made by the Supply Community Strategy since its inception, to assess the results achieved, and to identify areas for improvement.

The Supply Community Strategy has developed incrementally, beginning as an initial idea about the strategic importance of forming a Supply Community, without clear objectives, targets or activities. It was initiated by the SD Director's Office, then grew into an organizational strategy with three focus areas: learning and development; knowledge sharing and community building; and career progression and mobility.

The main objective of the strategy is to develop a community of Supply staff, comprised of personnel across HQ, SD and the Regional and Country Offices. This community should form the basis for learning and development, knowledge sharing, and career development, and, through these activities, encourage a sense of professional belonging among Supply staff.

The evaluation finds evidence that the strategy has improved the availability of required skills in the organization, contributed to cooperation and knowledge sharing, and improved the system of career progression. This has contributed to the creation of a community and to increased self-awareness and engagement of Supply staff with staff in Programme and Operations.

## *THE SUPPLY FUNCTION IN UNICEF*

The Supply function is critical to UNICEF's ability to deliver goods and services to children as effectively and efficiently as possible. Currently, UNICEF employs approximately 1,000 Supply staff in 99 offices across 94 countries.<sup>1</sup> They form the Supply Community, working together to support each component of the supply chain in the following activities:

- Definition of needs
- Budgeting and planning procurement
- Procurement
- Delivery and clearance
- Inspection
- Warehousing, distribution and reorder
- Utilization by the end-user
- Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

In this effort, UNICEF Supply activities include humanitarian preparedness and response, product innovation, and market influencing. Supply staff in Regional and Country Offices are assigned a range of specialized roles to support the supply chain. Supply officers, logisticians, procurement assistants, warehouse managers, market and monitoring analysts, technical

experts (WASH, medicines, vaccines, education, nutrition, etc.), and quality assurance experts work with officers responsible for shipping, contracting, finance, budget, accounts, Human Resources and M&E.

The Supply Community includes 350 members based in Supply Division (SD), Copenhagen, who fulfil a variety of global support functions and coordinate the work of Supply within the wider organization. SD defines the following core activities as its critical functions:<sup>2</sup>

- Support UNICEF programmes with an effective, efficient supply operation
- Help meet UNICEF's Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action with rapid response to provide emergency supply and logistical needs
- Support and monitor the performance of the global supply operation
- Provide procurement services to governments and development partners for strategic essential supplies
- Serve as a centre of expertise and knowledge on essential supplies for children and product innovation
- Establish policies for supply chain activities
- Lead UNICEF's work in innovation

### *CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TOWARDS A FUTURE SUPPLY COMMUNITY STRATEGY*

This evaluation concludes that SD (Supply Division) has demonstrated leadership and vision by establishing a Supply Community Strategy in response to the SFE (Evaluation of the Global Supply Function).

Evidence shows that this has led to concrete results (see Section 6.1). Based on the key findings, further inspired by the literature and a review of community practices in comparable international organizations (see Chapter 6), the evaluation proposes a number of recommendations to further improve the Community Strategy. Yet it must be understood that the development of a community can take time. Adopting the recommendations will contribute to further progress in the maturity of the Supply Community, as defined in chapter 6.

The recommendations are logically structured towards the further development of the Supply Community. Recommendation 1 calls for improving the foundations for knowledge and learning, and is complemented by recommendation 2, which addresses cultural, behavioral and motivational aspects to foster sharing and learning practices. Recommendation 3 addresses the barriers to participation and seeks to increase inclusiveness in the community's formal approach. In addition to the formal approach, recommendation 4 focuses on the creation of enabling environments for practice-based and informal learning. The definition of learning pathways as proposed by recommendation 5 seeks to link learning routes to the different roles and activities of Supply staff. Finally, recommendation 6 suggests future directions for improving monitoring of the implementation of the Supply Community Strategy.

**Recommendation 1: Create sub communities for specific strategic knowledge domains**

**Recommendation 2: Develop an approach to foster a culture of knowledge sharing and learning**

**Recommendation 3: Identify and remove barriers to participation in Supply Community learning activities.**

**Recommendation 4: Create enabling environments for practice-based and informal learning.**

**Recommendation 5: Define learning pathways that support the professional development of Supply staff**

**Recommendation 6: Improve monitoring of the implementation of the Supply Community Strategy.**