

## CHAPTER VIII

# REPORTING AND USING THE SURVEY FINDINGS

*This chapter is for programme decision-makers, survey coordinators and technical resource persons. It tells you how to:*

- ✓ Present the findings to decision-makers and the general public.
- ✓ Produce a preliminary report.
- ✓ Produce an executive summary.
- ✓ Produce a full report.
- ✓ Use your results. (Illustrations are provided.)

### REPORTING AT MID-DECADE

The report at mid-decade by the Secretary-General of the United Nations is important because it will summarise the way the international community has joined hands with governments, and they in turn with their constituents, to see that the promises made at the World Summit for Children engender action. The very act of measuring and reviewing progress toward the goals of each National Programme of Action is as important as achieving the goals themselves.

Each survey, from start to finish, is an opportunity for raising awareness. The measures of the mid-decade goal indicators should be used to reinforce programmes at all levels, to redirect or make corrective adjustments to programmes and National Plans of Action where necessary and to help policy makers take action that will build and sustain progress. That is why it is necessary to use the survey results to the fullest extent, building on the plans made in the early stages of survey planning.

### PRESENTING FINDINGS TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC

You and your team may be under intense pressure to release results quickly. Government officials, international organizations, statistical offices and even journalists will be asking, "What are the numbers?" These numbers, whether they are correct or not, will take on a life of their own once released, and may cause you a lot of trouble if you have not checked your arithmetic carefully.

During the course of the field work you should have used as many occasions as possible to report first impressions, to raise questions and to start corrective action at all levels. For example, you might ask the following questions: "Why isn't iodized salt found in the households?" "Why is

the vitamin A programme not reaching this area?" "Why are so many fewer girls attending school than reported by the school inspectors?"

Written summaries of overall results require more care. Once you have looked at your data critically, made the necessary calculations to produce your estimates and, if appropriate, plotted your results on graphs, you must produce reports that give "the numbers." These may take different forms, including policy briefs and summary sheets as well as reports.

Aim to get findings out quickly once you and your team have checked the results and tables. To speed results into action, plan on producing two reports: a preliminary report followed by a full technical report (which should include an executive summary).

Dialogue between health workers and community leaders can be encouraged by continued discussion around each report generated by this multiple-indicator survey. Even if subnational estimates are not reported, the national results can provide a focal point for discussing local or district-level problems and successes and for prioritizing future activities.

Raising public awareness of special problem areas (either specific indicators or areas at high risk) can lead to positive responses if the results are presented skillfully. And public understanding of problems can often be an important leverage tool, especially when programmes are community-based.

### **Producing a Preliminary Report**

The preliminary report is a brief and early version of the full technical report. It contains:

- the aims and objectives of the survey
- major results
- a discussion and preliminary recommendations
- the sample and methodology
- the field work: what questions were asked, how they were asked, and who asked them

Prepare the preliminary report first. Most sections of this brief report can be written as the survey operation progresses. Once the data are analysed, all that will remain will be to add the estimates of each indicator. Include only those major findings that are firm.

 It is important to have a section on the methodology even in the preliminary report. This section should describe the sampling scheme, the instruments, the field process, number of interviewers, losses and refusals and so forth. Position the methodology section in the report so that it does not divert the attention of policy makers away from the findings themselves.

Select the main findings and recommendations that you want everyone to remember. Use the preliminary report to circulate your main findings—some of which may require judgement and subsequent discussion—while there is still interest in the survey. If you have planned well and your survey organization runs smoothly, you should be able to prepare the preliminary report within one month to six weeks following the end of field work.

You may use the publication of the preliminary report as a vehicle to stimulate interest in the current health situation among government agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), other multilateral donors, the press and the public. You can also show where the biggest data gaps existed before the survey was conducted, and how these results have contributed to updating old information.

All major participants in the survey who are involved in the planning, implementation or analysis stages should be invited to participate in a meeting to present and discuss the main findings.

This publicity may result in additional interest in the survey results and lead to additional analysis of the data. Once the full technical report is complete, the survey data should be made available to qualified and interested parties for further use. This can contribute to the effective and widespread use of the survey results, and multiply the benefits of your effort and expenditure.

Other forms of survey reports may also be useful for reaching certain audiences: a short summary for those who were involved with the survey at some stage, such as interviewers or those who have given support to the survey; a report for community leaders about services and problems identified, including the most important conclusions of the survey analysis; and a press release summarising the most important conclusions of the survey. It is important to ensure that the press correctly reports the survey findings and does not distort them. Preparing your own press release can help ensure that results are accurately reported.

## **The Full Survey Report: Presenting Findings to Decision-Makers at Different Levels**

### ***The Executive Summary***

You and your national counterparts should agree upon the recommendations and actions to be taken upon publication of the final survey report. At this stage your findings are firm, and you and your team have had time to discuss and plan how to use them. This marks the start of advocacy efforts, programme consultations and strengthening and re-deploying resources.

Your full technical report should begin with an *executive summary* (see Box 8.1). Keep the executive summary short; it should not exceed a few pages, because policy makers will not read more than that.

The summary should include more descriptive and comparative information than technical information. It should report the highlights of the survey, but you must be sure of your findings since

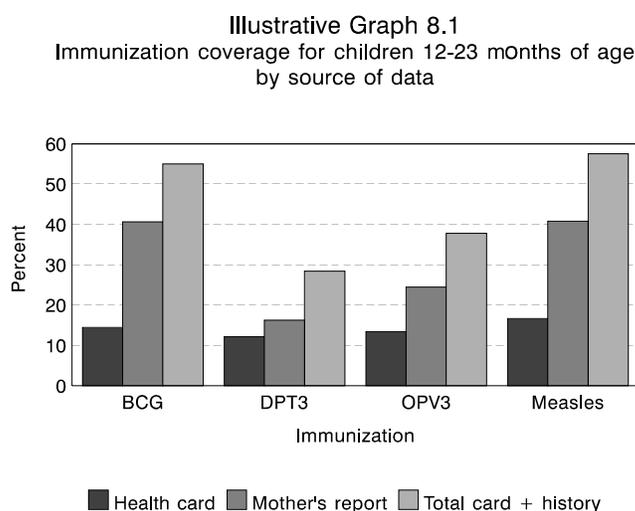
policy decisions will be made on the basis of this part of the report.

**EXAMPLE:**

Policy makers will want to know how the new estimates compare with past estimates. Has the country improved? How does it compare with other countries?

Remember that diagrams have more impact than long tables.

**EXAMPLE:**



The summary is also a tool for introducing the mid-decade goal indicators to a wide audience and can be used to emphasise the quality of previous information available about these indicators to policy makers. In many countries, some indicators have never been measured at the national level (salt iodization may be one example). Your presentation of results to policy makers should make this clear. The presentation should help to stimulate debate and lead to programmatic decisions where results indicate that action needs to be taken.

You may also be able to arrange special meetings on specific topics to which the survey results call attention.

**EXAMPLE:**

Legislation to promote salt iodization has been on the books for many years, and policy makers thought that public concern about goitre was unwarranted. The survey shows low levels of iodized salt in households—and that finding offers an opportunity to focus new attention on iodization needs and remedial action.

**Box 8.1**  
**ITEMS TO INCLUDE IN AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- ☞ Purpose of the survey
- ☞ Summary of progress in achieving goals, according to indicators measured by the survey
- ☞ Definitions of each indicator
- ☞ A brief description of the survey steps
- ☞ Country trends for goal indicators that have past data for comparison
- ☞ The main recommendations

***Producing the Technical Report***

The full technical report is essential if your survey results are to be viewed from an international perspective. This report enables all readers to judge the technical aspects of the survey operation, and to evaluate for themselves the quality of the data it produced and upon which your results are based. These surveys to monitor indicators of the Mid-Decade Goals must produce results that can withstand the heat of intense scrutiny and international comparison. For this reason, it is important to give all interested parties the information necessary to evaluate your results (see Box 8.2). That is the purpose of a full survey report.

The technical report is also the document governments will subsequently share for international reporting. Your role as an advisor is important for encouraging governments to share their results. An emphasis on process rather than on achievements should balance pride in accomplishment with an interest in turning problems into reasons for creating alliances for action. These alliances can be forged at many levels, including regional and international ones, when reports are shared openly. As soon as possible, copies of the report should be transmitted to all interested parties, including your UNICEF Regional Office and UNICEF Headquarters.

Be sure to include a discussion of the quality of the data the survey produced. Report the number of households sampled that did not complete the questionnaire, indicating the reasons for nonresponse. Indicate which items in the questionnaire were particularly difficult for respondents to answer, indicating those with high proportions of respondents answering "don't know" or items with a high proportion of responses coded as "missing." Also, describe your survey sample of households, women and children according to the sociodemographic characteristics you collected. For example, describe the per cent urban and rural, the average number of persons per household, the sex and age distribution of children and any other characteristics of the sample you think are important. Describe the details of the sample design in an appendix to the main report.

**Box 8.2**  
**THE COMPONENTS OF A FULL SURVEY REPORT**

- Executive summary.
- Aims and objectives of the survey.
- Sample design and size, what was used as a sampling frame, and the method used to choose households in each community.
- The questionnaire.
- Description of the field work.
- A description of when and how the field work was done and a list of the supervisors and interviewers, including a copy of the questionnaire, along with interviewers' and supervisors' instructions.
- Data entry procedures:
  - Was data cleaning and editing necessary? What was done?
  - How much time and how many personnel were needed?
- Evaluation of data quality, including a description of problems with missing data for any particular questions and the nonresponse rate.
- Results and interpretation of your estimates.
  - Where possible, compare your results with those obtained from other sources and with neighboring countries.
- Conclusions and actions planned, recommendations for future surveys or studies, acknowledgements for help and support received from individuals and organizations.

***Report the Indicator Estimates***

Describe briefly each method of calculation and the data used in the calculations. Report the values of each indicator. Explain and report the margin of error around your estimates. Caution your readers that all the estimates obtained fall within these confidence limits.

Use tables, graphs and charts to display your results.

 **EXAMPLE:**

Include a table giving low-weight-for-age data, as in the following illustrative table:

**Illustrative Table 8.1 Per cent of under-fives with low weight-for-age (and margins of error), urban and rural areas**

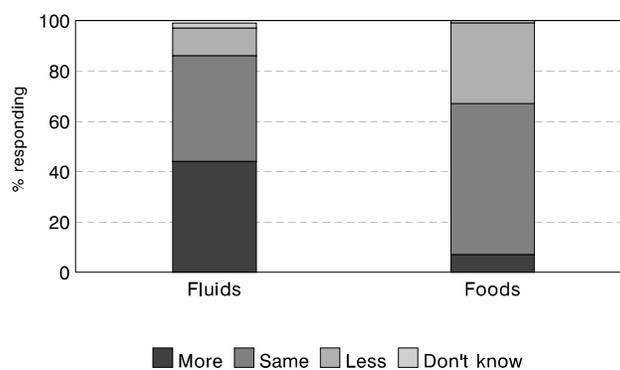
Residence	Low weight-for-age (%)*	Number of children
Urban	10.7 (9.5, 12.5)	1,273
Rural	15.9 (13.0, 16.7)	1,989

**Note:** Children are classified as low weight-for-age if their z-score was two or more standard deviations below the median international standard.

**EXAMPLE:**

Present a graph showing the changes in the amount of fluids and food that mothers give to children who have diarrhoea.

**Illustrative Graph 8.2**  
Changes in the amount of fluids and foods given to children with diarrhoea



Note: Diarrhoea during two weeks preceding survey

Report estimates for subpopulations if your sample size allows these calculations.

**EXAMPLE:**

Report estimates for males and females separately, for urban and rural areas separately (if you have distinguished rural from urban clusters) and for regions.

Compare your results with any earlier estimates and reports which are available to you. Read reports from other surveys before trying to interpret your results and point out any caveats about the comparisons being made.

**EXAMPLE:**

Present a table giving information about diarrhoea prevalence.

**Illustrative Table 2. Incidence of diarrhoea by child's sex and residence, and per cent of children under five years of age who had diarrhoea in the two weeks preceding the survey**

Variable	Per cent with diarrhoea	Number of children
Sex		
Male	27.5%	2,582
Female	28.7%	2,580
Residence		
Urban	28.1%	2,535
Rural	28.1%	2,626

Finally, be sure to circulate an early draft of the report to all collaborators and others who may be able to provide valuable comments before it is finally published.

## FROM DATA TO INFORMATION

### Using the Bangladesh Survey Data

With the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), the Institute of Statistical Research, Bangladesh, and the UN Statistical Office, UNICEF's Bangladesh office helped develop and implement a Multiple-Indicator Survey that helps to monitor many of the Mid-Decade and Year 2000 Goals. Seen as a valuable complement to other data collection activities and a tool for validating routine reports from the health services, the methodology has been institutionalised for continued use by the BBS. Two surveys, in 1993 and 1994, have already been done and will be repeated annually by the BBS.

From the very beginning of the survey planning process, special emphasis was given to the use of the survey results. This meant that at the very start, selection of the questions to be asked in the survey was tied very precisely to the uses that would be made of the answers.

In Bangladesh the results of the Multiple-Indicator Surveys have served a myriad of purposes, making full use of the time and effort which went into planning and carrying out these surveys. In the following sections, some of the key areas in which the data have been put to action

are described. Goal-monitoring has become a self-sustaining process in Bangladesh, with the government initiating and directing these simple surveys. Not only have UNICEF programmes benefited from the survey data, but so have many other programmes supported by other agencies. This diverse and widespread use has been possible because the Bangladesh office made certain to work with national partners to build capacity and to see that results were given wide exposure. Policy reports made the information accessible to other organizations in readable and usable form. It is clear that the methodology and the results of the survey are fully integrated into the social development schema of Bangladesh.

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**The surveys promote improved national capacity for assessing the situation of children and tracking progress toward national goals for children.**

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### ***The Final Report: Monitoring the Goals***

The survey results are used to report on the progress made toward achieving goals in the country. They are disseminated in the book *Progothir Pathey*, meaning "the path of progress," which is published annually by the BBS and is widely distributed to all ministries, district officials, NGOs, donors and academic institutions. It contains national trend information on the mortality, fertility and literacy indicators; maps showing the spatial coverage variations of selected indicators; summary tables of data disaggregated by gender, area of residence (urban/rural, slum/non-slum) and ethnicity; and district-specific tables reflecting the achievement of various indicators by gender. *Progothir Pathey* has already become a reference publication for researchers, social scientists and development workers in Bangladesh. The results of the survey are also being used to validate the completeness of the routine reporting systems of the government.

### ***Other Reporting Formats: Advocacy and Policy Dialogue***

The results of the survey provide valuable information for initiating advocacy and policy dialogue, not only for UNICEF, but for other UN and donor agencies and NGOs. The Center for Policy Dialogue, an NGO, is currently carrying out an in-depth analysis of survey data to initiate a national policy dialogue of some of the key disparity issues. The employment of maps to show the use of iodized salt in the country has been critical in shaping government policy for importing iodized salt and enforcing the universal salt iodization legislation in the country. UNICEF is also using these results to publish their annual statistical card series—a set of pocket cards containing key data, their implications and desired actions. These statistical cards are very popular amongst political leaders, administrators and the donor community.

### ***Using the Survey Results for Expanded Action***

The results of the survey are compared with the Mid- and Year 2000 Goals to calculate a "challenge factor," which is the gap between the goal and the existing level of coverage, expressed as a per cent. The challenge factor is then used to classify districts by their level of performance and therefore by the level of attention and inputs necessary to bring them up to the level of other districts. The annual average rate of change (AARC) is then used to set district-specific targets for various indicators. The survey data are further analysed to calculate the design effect for each indicator in each district. This design effect indicator is used to identify areas with the greatest intra-district variations in levels of coverage. Based on this analysis, key district-specific strategies for action are identified. All this information is presented in a situation analysis published and prefaced by the Planning Commission in Bangladesh. *KAMONA* ("desire"), as it is called, is distributed to all ministries, district-level staff, NGOs and donor agencies. A Bangla version of *KAMONA* is distributed as a part of the State of the World's Children report kit. It provides a local-level agenda for action for social development workers in Bangladesh.

### ***Subnational Planning: Looking Beyond National Averages***

Data disaggregated by gender and area of residence have brought the need for subnational planning to the forefront. With the help of the survey results, it has been possible to identify the districts which are lagging behind in various sectors. This information has resulted in the development of more efficient and need-based plans of action in particular areas for the achievement of the Mid-Decade and Year 2000 Goals.

**The survey should encourage policy makers to look at the information behind the national averages.**

### ***Interagency Cooperation***

The survey results have provided another opportunity for interagency cooperation. The availability of survey data and its use for synthetic estimation of mortality and fertility at the district level now allows UNICEF and UNDP to work together to develop district-specific human development indices (HDIs) for inclusion in the *Bangladesh Human Development Report, 1995*. The Asia Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank have also asked UNICEF for support in organizing special surveys, using the Multiple-Indicator Survey methodology, for collecting subnational data necessary for project design. This cooperation opens new possibilities

**The surveys provide special opportunities for promoting interagency cooperation between international organizations and the host government.**

for UNICEF's participation in the design of large projects and as well as in policy dialogue.

### ***UNICEF Country Programme of Cooperation: Increased Efficiency and Effectiveness***

The UNICEF Country Programme of Cooperation 1996–2000 uses the Convention on the Rights of the Child as its framework. With most of the Mid-Decade Goals and some Year 2000 Goals already achieved in Bangladesh, the new programme places emphasis on equity and reduction of disparities. The survey data have successfully identified interdistrict, interdivision, gender and ethnic variations and form the basis for the design and development of programmes for 1996–2000. The phasing plan of the Accelerated District Approach (ADA) of the new proposed country programme uses challenge factors to identify districts requiring the most attention and input. Thus, districts with the highest challenge factor—the weakest districts—are given more time, input and attention to help them to catch up with the other districts in levels of coverage and performance.

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**Survey results can help UNICEF make sure that its own programming efforts and its assistance are more efficient and effective.**

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### ***Staff Assignment and Budget Exercise***

The staff assignment and relocation for the 1996/97 budget exercise is also based on the results of the Multiple-Indicator Survey. For total office mobilisation to make an impact in achieving the goals, senior and more experienced staff have been assigned to districts with high challenge factors. Because it recognises the complexity of working in a high-challenge factor district, UNICEF Bangladesh has limited the responsibilities of the staff in those areas to facilitating the achievement of the goals in only one district, while staff assigned to low-challenge factor districts might be covering more than one district. This approach has allowed UNICEF Bangladesh to more rationally reallocate its staff (and even retrench some posts) without affecting overall office performance and efficiency.

### **Reviews of Progress by Heads of State, Mayors and the Public**

In country after country attention at the highest level of policy-making to the needs of children and women has turned goal-setting into visible improvements. There is a demand for current, reliable information to assess problems and progress. The time-bound, measureable nature of the Mid-Decade and Year 2000 Goals has set a premium on responding to the demand to know.

In the past, surveys or other monitoring systems all too often meant a lengthy, costly process where the results came long after policy makers had posed the questions. The desire to know, and

the potential for action, had then passed. Final reports resembled academic treatises, discouraging even those dedicated to learning from the results.

Today, high-level policy concern, skilled summaries by planners and the media as well as action by programme managers are making it possible for the public to demand and learn the progress being made toward goals.

 **EXAMPLES:**

The president of Mexico has presided over six public meetings to evaluate progress on the National Programme of Action.

Mayors in the Philippines in the 60-member League of Cities initiated annual reports of progress to track the impact of City Plans of Action for children to achieve the goals.<sup>1</sup>



This handbook provides you with the means to work with others to produce current assessments of progress in a focused, rapid, cost-effective fashion. We hope you will find it a useful resource. Each survey provides an opportunity to raise awareness, foster dialogue between health workers, community leaders and public officials, and to take corrective action. Measuring and presenting current status on the indicators is a most powerful driving force toward informed action for children.

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<sup>1</sup>For a summary of national and subnational action and status in the Philippines, see *Progress of the Philippines: 1995 Mid-Decade Goals* (Manila: Government of the Republic of the Philippines and UNICEF, 1994).

**Box 8.3****Checklist for Reporting Your Results**

- **Produce a preliminary report.** Include:
  - ✓ aims and objectives of the survey
  - ✓ major results
  - ✓ discussion and preliminary recommendations
  - ✓ sample and methodology
  - ✓ field work: questions asked, how they were asked, and who asked them
- **Produce an executive summary.** Remember to:
  - ✓ explain why mid-decade goal indicators are measured
  - ✓ be sure of your findings
  - ✓ include more descriptive and comparative information than technical information
  - ✓ summarise progress in achieving goals, according to indicators measured by the survey
  - ✓ give definitions of each indicator
  - ✓ describe the survey steps
  - ✓ provide the country trends for goal indicators that have past data available for comparison
  - ✓ present the main recommendations
- **Produce a full technical report.** Include:
  - ✓ an executive summary
  - ✓ aims and objectives of the survey
  - ✓ details of the sampling techniques used
  - ✓ a copy of the questionnaire used
  - ✓ details of the field work
  - ✓ data-entry procedures
  - ✓ an evaluation of data quality
  - ✓ the results
  - ✓ an interpretation of the results, comparing them with results from other sources, and with data from neighboring countries
  - ✓ conclusions, recommendations and acknowledgements
- **Make the reports of survey results fully accessible to all organizations which might make use of them.** Ensure the widest possible dissemination of results by calling discussion meetings with donors, ministry officials and community leaders, and by ensuring press coverage of these meetings.