

Foreword

The articles in this *IDS Bulletin*, with one exception, derive from a research study commissioned by UNICEF and undertaken by IDS with UNICEF staff participation. This study, phase I of the Real Time Monitoring for the Most Vulnerable (RTMMV) project, was an initiative of UNICEF's Division of Policy and Strategy, with support from UNICEF Offices in seven countries that were developing innovative approaches to monitoring. These country case studies were selected to allow a deeper understanding of key issues concerning the use and potential of Real Time Monitoring (RTM) for improving equity results within a specific country or local context, while giving a wide representation to UNICEF's priority programme areas. In addition, the study involved a Desk Review, prior to country studies, and two articles

here build on that work. The country studies were reviewed at a global consultation workshop held in June 2012 at IDS where invited experts also discussed some of the main recommendations from the draft Synthesis Report, on which the first article is based. In a rapidly changing ICT landscape and given the immensely complex settings where UNICEF operates, developing the learning agenda on RTM is a daunting task and we are yet low on a steep learning curve. Nonetheless, we hope that this body of research is a timely step forward towards providing a useful assessment of the opportunities and challenges in developing RTM systems, especially those using modern ICTs, and their ability to address issues of equity.

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